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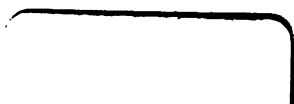
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ALLERTON AND DREUX;

OR,

The War of Opinion.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "A RHYMING CHRONICLE."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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CONTENTS.

	Page
CHAPTER I.	
ASLEEP BENEATH THE CEDARS	1
CHAPTER II.	
THE LITTLE TEA-MAKER	25
CHAPTER III.	
THE TWIN CHILDREN	60
CHAPTER IV.	
A JOURNEY IN A FOG	75
CHAPTER V.	
THE COWSLIP PICKING	102
CHAPTER VI.	
THE LIGHT IN THE IVYED CASEMENT . .	132
CHAPTER VII.	
GENEROUS REGRETS	165

	Page
CHAPTER VIII.	
THE HEROINE WITHOUT ADMIRERS . . .	201
CHAPTER IX.	
A PATENT ANTI-TALKING SOCIETY . . .	244
CHAPTER X.	
ROSINA	285
CHAPTER XI.	
FRANK MAIDLEY MORALIZES	321
CHAPTER XII.	
MAIDLEY'S EDIFYING CONFESSION OF HIS FAULTS	345
CHAPTER XIII.	
A CHARADE ACTED TWICE	393
CHAPTER XIV.	
DISUNION	428



CHAPTER I.

ASLEEP BENEATH THE CEDARS.

THERE was a quiet chamber in an old country-house, where, once in the depth of winter, sat an old nurse, with a young infant on her knee.

The red curtains were let down before the windows, the floor was covered with a thick carpet, and a large fire blazed upon the hearth; the nurse glanced towards the bed where her lady was sleeping, and then drew her knees still nearer to the flame, and began to moralize. What a strange thing it was, she thought, that the Rector and his wife, whose wish for children had been well known in the parish, should have had none for so many years; while in many a cottage, where they met with but a poor welcome and scanty fare, they came regularly once a-year, though the fathers grumbled at the creaking of the cradle-rockers, and the mothers declared, with tears in their eyes, that they did not know where the crust and the clothes were to come from.

She heard the church clock strike twelve, and thought, with a shiver, how her poor grandchildren

were shaking in their beds ;—the snow lay five feet deep in the fields, and was falling still ; a flock of sheep had been dug out in the morning ; such a hard winter had not been known for years. Well, God help all poor folks ! if she had not had such a good supper she might have considered their case with keener consideration ; but as it was, she rocked the sleeping infant softly, and fell into a light doze.

A cautious footstep without presently aroused her. She lifted up her head : " Bless the man, if he isn't here again," she thought, with a slight chuckle of amusement, " and afraid to come in for fear of disturbing 'em." She coughed slightly, to show that she was awake, and the door thereupon was softly opened, and a stout, cheerful-looking gentleman came in with elaborate caution.

" And how are they by this time, Mrs. Keane ?"

" They're as well as can be, bless you, Sir," answered Mrs. Keane, for at least the twentieth time during the last afternoon.

" I hope this cold night is not against the infant."

" Bless you, no, Sir ; don't be afraid ; they live fast enough when they're not wanted ; you shouldn't be in such a mighty fuss about it. If you don't think no more about it than other folks, the child will live like other folks' children."

Perhaps the Doctor might have thought there was something in this reasoning, or perhaps he thought the old Nurse was tired of his questions. Certain it is that he did not come again till six o'clock in

the morning, when he was rewarded by hearing his wife declare herself very comfortable, and also by hearing his child cry with all the strength of her baby lungs.

In time he got accustomed to the honour of possessing a daughter, though he firmly believed that so sweet a child had never existed before, and wondered how he had contrived to pass so many years in tolerable happiness without her.

That very day next year, and Mrs. Keane always said ever after that it was (next to the circumstance of Mrs. Maidley's eldest being born on a Lady-day and her second on a Christmas-day) the oddest thing that had happened to any of her ladies, —the Rector's wife gave birth to a son. It was the same day, and the same time of day, as she always said when she told the story; and what made it more particular was, that whereas the first was the coldest winter ever known, so that the pretty dear never breathed the fresh air (excepting when they took her to be baptized) till she was nearly three months old, the second was, on the contrary, one of the mildest ever known, so that the last china rose had not faded before the earliest primrose came out. Little Marion was a fine child, with light hair and dimpled cheeks; her face almost always expressed the serene happiness which is the natural dower of infant humanity. Her brother was an active, mischievous boy, round-faced, noisy, and good-humoured. Their parents, whose love increased with their growth, began early

to make them the companions of their country walks; and many a time, when the lanes were too heavy for his wife to walk in, the Rector would carry his little daughter with him on his errands of mercy, that he might listen to her pretty prattle by the way.

In after-years, when Marion, sitting by the fire on a winter evening, would try to remember these days of her childhood, and to recal the image of her father, there were only a few scattered words that he had said, and expressions of endearment used towards herself and her brother, which seemed to survive of him in her memory: he was confused and blended with the many baby fancies and wonders which beset a childish reason. She could not separate him from them; he had become like a companion in a dream, an actor in some previous existence; and withdrawn into the background of her thoughts, though often present with them, however vaguely, he still exercised a real dominion over her: his words were forgotten, but a certain consciousness of the meaning that they were intended to convey was left: the tones of his voice, before their meaning could be fully understood, had influenced the first dawn of her feelings; and early as he left her, that influence could never be set aside.

But there was one day in Marion's childhood that she did remember distinctly, and well. It was a beautiful afternoon in the beginning of August, perfectly clear and cloudless; there had been rain

in the night, but not more than enough to lay the dust in the quiet country lanes through which she and her father walked.

It was the first day of wheat harvest, and Marion remembered how she had listened to the voices of the reapers through the hedge, and how her father had lifted her up that she might gather a long tendrill of the wild vine for herself, and had cut her some briar roses with his knife.

She then remembered how they had entered the partially-cut corn-field, and how her father had sat down beside the reapers, who were collected together under the shade of the hedge, eating their afternoon meal.

It might be from having heard some of those who listened then speak of it afterwards and repeat his words, or it might be that her childish mind was more open and alive than usual ; but Marion remembered distinctly some of his remarks as he sat and talked with the reapers. She thought, too, that she could recal the persuasive tones of his voice, when he said, "Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth us rain, the former and the latter in his season ; He reserveth to us the appointed weeks of the harvest." (Jer. v. 24.)

Walking through the corn-field home, Marion had gathered some blue corn-flowers, and picked up a few ears of wheat : these she recollected giving to him to carry for her, and that was the last walk she

took with him, and the very last thing she remembered of her father.

On that day, which was the 1st of August, the harvest began in the parish ; that day three weeks the last load was led from the fields. Some of the same labourers who sat to rest with him under the trees, were with the heavy waggon as it wound slowly through the narrow lanes, past the Rectory-house, and along by the side of the churchyard wall. They turned their heads that way as they went, and looked towards two cedar-trees that stood in one corner : the long shadow of the steeple seemed to be pointing to a new grave that was beneath them, and to a strange gentleman who stood beside it. The labourers went on ; they knew who the stranger was, though he had been but three days in the parish. The dead and the living, the new Rector and the old, had met together ; the old Rector was gone to his account, and another was already appointed in his room.

The new Rector leaned against the trunk of the great cedar-tree, with his arms folded and his eyes fixed upon the grave ; he watched the long shadow of the church steeple, stealing gradually over the tomb of his predecessor—he saw beyond the boundary walls of the churchyard, orchards and corn-fields, scattered cottages and homesteads, peering out from among the thick trees ; blue smoke was curling up from them, and within were people

to whose necessities *he* had ministered, and whose spiritual wants he had striven to supply. The scene of his labours was spread out before the eyes of his successor, as well as the place of his rest. Doubtless he had often stood in that self-same place and looked upon that self-same scene. Perhaps the same thoughts and the same perplexities had suggested themselves to his mind, and some warm thoughts of household love besides; for between the green ash-trees that grew by the lane side, might be seen the sloping lawn and the white gables of his earthly home.

The turf had been broken in two or three places not far off: it could not be long since he had stood there. Had he any rejoicing now, any "profit of all his labour that he had taken under the sun?" Had God acknowledged and blessed it? Had he entered upon his rest with those so lately committed to the dust, saying of them, "Behold, here am I, and the children that thou hast given me!"

For himself there could not be a doubt that he had died the death of the righteous; but the flock that he had left behind, had they been willing and obedient, would they bear his words in mind now that he was gone? If so, there was the more hope for his successor. Or would they suffer them lightly to be effaced, like his footsteps in the path that were already obliterated, and the sounds of his voice, the last echo of which had utterly died away?

The new Rector roused himself at last from his

long reverie, and walked slowly towards the church. The clerk had brought him the key that morning, he had read himself in the day before, and with a vague, uneasy sense of possession and responsibility, he turned it in the rusty lock and entered. The great door creaked heavily behind, and closed with a hollow looming sound, that was repeated in the roof and among the pillars as he advanced towards the chancel.

The church was a fine structure, plain but ancient and substantial; there was room for nearly 800 people within its walls, but the population did not amount to more than two-thirds of that number, and of these a considerable proportion always stayed away.

As he walked up the centre aisle, and turned his eyes first to one side and then to the other, he became conscious in a painful degree of the oppressive stillness of the place, and looking upon it as the scene in which he expected to pass the most momentous hours of his future life—a place which was familiar with the tones of departed voices, which had repeated and echoed the warnings of many a now silenced pastor, and been filled with the psalmody of fore-gone generations,—he felt like one in the presence of many witnesses, brought into unwonted nearness with the past, such contact as almost to make him look upon himself as an intruder, one that had come to the dwelling of beings unseen, the fall of whose foot was strange

to their ears, as he moved beneath the high stone arches, observed but not perceiving.

"Work while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work"—this seemed to be their injunction. "O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me," was the substance of his answer.

Some time passed while he was examining the church, vestry, and vaults; at length he came back to the door, and turned his eyes again towards the grave. The long shadow of the church had completely covered it now, and two little children in deep mourning were sitting at its head.

The Rector who had died in the evening of that same day that he took the last walk with his little child, had now been buried more than a fortnight, and his tomb, which was a large flat stone not raised more than a foot and a-half from the ground, had been completed only two days. The inscription was simple and short:—

"SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF THE REV. WALTER GREYSON,
FOR TWELVE YEARS RECTOR OF THIS PARISH.
DIED AUGUST 1ST, 18—,
IN THE 41ST YEAR OF HIS AGE.
'The dead in Christ shall rise.'"

Two little children, perfectly silent, sat together by the stone, as if waiting for some absent person, the one watching him as he came towards them, the other playing with a few daisies that he held in his pinafore. They did not move when he

came up to them and looked at their blooming faces, with the full consciousness of whose children they must be; and there was an intentional quietness about them that showed plainly to one so well acquainted as himself with the workings of infant minds, that they imagined themselves in the presence of their father, and had a vague impression that they must not make a noise lest they should disturb him.

"Why do you come here, little Marion?" said he, stooping down and addressing the elder child by the name he knew she bore.

"To see papa," replied the child in a low, cautious voice.

Humouring her fancy, he sat down beside her, and placing her gently on his knee, parted back her soft hair, and wondered whether her father might have resembled her; then sinking his voice almost to a whisper, he laid his hand on the stone and said, "But is papa here?"

"Papa's gone to heaven," said the younger child, looking up for a moment from his daisies.

But little Marion, who had gazed at him with a perplexed and dubious expression, now slipped off his knee, and swept softly away with her hand two or three yellow leaves that had fallen from a young lime-tree upon the tomb, and then came back with childlike simplicity, and let him take her in his arms again.

This little action, so full of affection, her evident



though unexpressed belief that her father was there, that he could not leave the place, but yet that it was unkind to leave him there alone, together with the tender and cautious manner with which she swept them away from the face of the cold stone, as if even her father's tomb was already becoming confused in her mind into a part of himself,—these things touched him with a strong feeling of tenderness for her, and little Marion, as the strange gentleman drew her closer towards him, was surprised to see that his eyes were filled with tears.

“Where is your mamma,” said he after a long silence.

“Mamma’s very ill now,” said little Marion, “she can’t come and see poor papa.”

God comfort her, thought the new Rector, hers is a bitter trial indeed !

Sitting on the tomb of their father with the two children in his arms, he felt that in their desolate state, they were as much given over to him as if he could have heard a voice from the tomb commending them to his care ; while they were well content to receive his caresses, quite unconscious that his future affection was to be one of the best blessings of their lives, quite careless as to why he bestowed it, or who he might be.

He was still talking to them when a young servant in deep mourning advanced towards him, and seemed relieved at sight of the children. She accounted for their having strayed into the church-

yard by saying, that owing to the dangerous illness of her mistress the house was in great confusion, and they had been sent to play alone in the garden that they might be out of the way.

The children lifted up their faces to kiss their new friend, and obtained from him a promise that he would come again the next day ; then turning away with their maid, began to skip about and laugh as soon as they had got a little distance from their father's grave.

There was no rectory in the parish, though the house where Mr. Greyson had lived had naturally gone by that name ; there was, therefore, no need for the poor widow to think of moving, or for others to think of it for her ; while day after day, and week after week she lay almost unconscious of the lapse of time, and passed through the wearisome stages of a severe illness occasioned by the overwhelming shock of her husband's sudden death, watched over with the utmost tenderness by her two sisters through sufferings that at one time left but little hope either for her life or her reason. However, with the passing away of the old year, which seemed to take all the severity of the winter with it, she suddenly began to revive, and, once able to rise from her bed, her recovery was as rapid as her prostration had been complete.

In the meanwhile the new Rector had been labouring among the poor, and carrying out to the utmost the plans of his predecessor. He, however,

failed at first to make himself acceptable to the people, and for three or four months had the pain of seeing the attendance at the church get gradually less and less. The people complained that they did not hear him well, that his voice was thick and indistinct; others declared that though he read the prayers very well, he mumbled his sermons, so that they did not understand them. All agreed that he was a good gentleman, and had a very kind way with him, but still he was not like Mr. Greyson, and they did not think they could ever take to any one else as they had done to him.


So the verdict was given against him in many of the cottages, and though they bestowed a great many curtsies upon him, they gave him very few smiles. There was a certain reserve and silence about him which the poor mistook for pride, and not conceiving it possible that a gentleman like him could be conscious of any such feeling as shyness or awkwardness in talking to them, drew back themselves, and increased his uneasiness by their distant coldness and respect. So the new Rector lived till Christmas, personally, as well as mentally, alone. He had very few acquaintances in the neighbourhood, and the few country families whom he visited were as much influenced as the poor themselves by the sensitive reserve of his manners. He did not seem at ease in society, and as to his own people he evidently felt that, at least at present, they had few sympathies in common. But he was

always happy and at his ease with children ; it was part of the singularity of his character to understand their motives and enter into their affections without an effort. The expression of his countenance, the tone of his voice, the very touch of his hand seemed to undergo a change when he took a child upon his knee and smoothed down its soft hair with his open palm.

He was a tall man, with a powerful frame, a light complexion, and a slight stoop in his shoulders ; his features were rather heavy, and when he was at all agitated he had a slight hesitation in his speech, or rather a difficulty in expressing himself, that gave him an appearance of indecision and vacillation quite foreign to his real character.

At length, though his conscientious care for them in public, and his visits to the sick could not win the hearts of the people, a circumstance very slight in itself, and arising naturally out of his love for children, caused the feeling towards him to undergo a sudden change ; he rose at once to the height of popularity, and the reason was no other than this :—

There was a new school-room in the parish, very near the church ; it was finished soon after Mr. Greyson's death, and opened for use in the middle of November. The village, which was a scattered one, was situate partly above and partly below the site of the school-room, and those children who had to come down the hill to it were obliged to cross a



little brook that ran over the road, or rather lane, not far from the house where the new Rector lived. Now this little brook, as the autumn happened to be a remarkably dry one, was so slight an impediment that any child could step across it without wetting its feet, and this state of things continued for some weeks after the new room was opened.

One morning, however, when the Rector went to visit it, he was surprised to see the floor covered with little wet footmarks, and on asking the reason of this, as the road was quite dry, the mistress told him that the rains of the past week had so swollen the brook, that almost all the children had wetted their feet in springing over it.

"Indeed, Mr. Raeburn, I don't believe there's a single dry foot in the school," she said, drawing off the shoes of a tiny child, and letting the water drop down from them.

"That's bad," said Mr. Raeburn; "we must make a little bridge over the stream. Now, children, when you come in the afternoon, mind, you're not to cross the brook till I come to you."

Accordingly, in the afternoon he went down to the brook, which, though only three or four inches deep, was as wide as a man could stride over; here he found a large attendance waiting for him in a smiling row, with little ticket bags in their hands, and, planting one foot firmly on each side, he took up each little creature in turn, and set her down on the other side. The children were delighted with

the bustle and importance of being carried, and, above all, with the idea of having a bridge made on purpose for them ; but Mr. Raeburn found to his disappointment, when he examined the place next day, that the lane was so narrow that every waggon which went down it would demolish his bridge with its heavy wheels ; he was, therefore, obliged to repeat the experiment of transporting them himself all through the winter ; their pleasure in the short trip seeming to compensate him for the trouble, and he not being at all conscious that he was winning for himself " golden opinions from all sorts of people," filling his church by this indirect means, and laying the foundation of a popularity that was to last till his dying day ; but such proved to be the case. Every mother's heart is accessible through her child ; her feelings are touched by kindness shown to it, and her pride is flattered by notice taken of it. It is quite true that some of these poor women did not mind particularly whether their children got their feet wet or not, but still it was gratifying to think that the Rector cared, that he did not mind leaving his breakfast to come out and carry them over. It was their children who were of so much consequence, therefore their own importance was increased, and their husbands, fathers, and brothers heard so much henceforward of Mr. Raeburn's marvellous and varied good qualities, that even if they had been disposed to deny them, they must soon have given in for the sake of peace and

quietness. He was pronounced from that time to be one of the pleasantest gentlemen that ever lived—a little distant like, but then he could not possibly be proud, or he would never have demeaned himself to wait upon *their* children. It was also discovered that if his voice was not quite “so clear as a bell,” it was a very pleasant voice, and any one could hear every word he said that would take the trouble of listening. Also woe betide the rash individual who dared after that to say he or she could not make out the meaning of his sermons. “Some folks,” it would be remarked in reply, “never knew when they were well off; but if some folks would attend to the discourse as other folks did, instead of going to sleep, looking out of window, or staring about them, perhaps they would learn the value of a good plain sermon that had no fine words in it, and not go to try to make other folks believe they couldn’t make out the meaning of it.”

The subject of this wonderful revolution of opinion, though far from divining the cause, soon began to rejoice in the effects of it. He found that wherever he went he was greeted with smiles; the best chair was brought near the fire for him and dusted with the good wife’s apron. He wondered at first, but soon learnt to refer it to the force of habit, arguing to himself that the people from being used to him had come to like him.

It was a very pleasant change to him, and one that soon wrought a corresponding change in his

own manner. As for the children they had no opinion to alter ; from the first they had been on his side, for, unlike other gentlemen of his age and gravity, he had a curious habit of carrying apples, cakes, peppermint, &c., in his coat pockets, not apparently for his own eating, for when he met a few small parishioners he used to throw down some of these delicacies in the road, and walk on, without saying a word or turning round to see whether they picked them up.

He had also a singular habit of muttering to himself, as he walked down the lanes, with his eyes on the ground and his hands in his pockets. When first the people saw him thus engaged, and so deep in thought as to be unconscious of the presence of any one whom he might chance to meet, they said he was reckoning over his tithes ; but afterwards it was reported that he was repeating prayers,—perhaps for them. Thus it soon became true of him, as of King David of old, “ The people took notice of it, and it pleased them ; as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people.”

So passed the time till the end of January, the two fatherless children of the late Rector becoming daily more endeared to his eccentric successor. He used constantly, when he saw them playing in the garden with their nurse, to call them to the little low hedge, and lift them over to take a walk with him. Many a long mile he carried them, first one and then the other, when the distance wearied

them ; and they soon learned to substitute him for their father, and gradually began to look to him for their little pleasures, following him about in his garden, and into the church and church-yard, where, with a sweet childish superstition, they always lowered their voices when they passed their father's grave.

Thus he had become a most familiar friend to the children before their mother had seen his face. For the first five months of her widowhood she had not been able to bear an interview with him ; but, with her sudden restoration to some measure of health, the natural strength and self-possession of her character returned, and she sent a message to request that he would come and see her.

After the affecting accounts that he had heard of her sufferings, both of body and mind, he was surprised at the perfect calmness with which she received him. She even evinced a desire to speak on the subject of her loss, and turned from more general topics to thank him for his kindness to her children ; alluding to their fatherless condition without outward emotion, but with that quiet sorrow that leaves little for a sympathizing friend to say. Mr. Raeburn had not uttered many words before she perceived that he possessed in no ordinary degree the power of entering into the distress of others. The slight hesitation of his voice was very much against him when he endeavoured to enforce a truth or make an appeal to the reason of

his hearers ; but in this case it imparted a touching gentleness to all he said, and his efforts to overcome his natural reserve, and his evident anxiety lest he might disturb instead of soothing her, were more grateful tokens of his fellow-feeling than any attempts he might have made at consolation.

But he made none. All topics of consolation had been exhausted on her, all reasons why she should bear up suggested, all alleviating circumstances pointed out long ago. Her friends had been very anxious that she should see the man who was now appointed to be her spiritual guide, thinking that he might be able to say still more than they had done to comfort her. But now that she had overcome her strong reluctance, he sat beside her, offering few admonitions to submission or patience. His manner seemed to express a consciousness that *he* could not lighten the dark valley through which she was walking, at the same time that it gave evidence of his willingness, if it were possible, to enter it with her by sympathy and walk for a while by her side.

There was no intruding, *but* in his consolation ;— he seemed to admit at once the greatness of her trial.

Her sisters and friends had said, "It is true that your trial is great, *but* would it not have been greater if pecuniary difficulties had been added? It is certain that you are greatly to be pitied, *but* what would it have been if you had felt no comfort

as to the state of his soul? It is not to be denied that your circumstances are distressing, *but* they might have been far more so. It is a sad thing to have lost your husband, *but* no tears will bring him back, and you must endeavour to be resigned."

No such reasons for resignation were urged by the successor of her late husband. He showed, indeed, by the tone of his voice, and the expression of his countenance, that he understood and entered into her trial; but his manner expressed a perfect consciousness that no earthly voice could heal the wound. He did not even remind her of the undoubted fact, that time would *certainly* moderate her sorrow,—that most true but least welcome source of comfort that can be offered to a mourner.

This singularity of manner, this casting aside all the usual phrases and subjects that form the matter of conversation between the happy and the unhappy, often proved distressing to those who did not know the real feeling with which he "wept with those that wept." But in the case of Mrs. Greyson, it afforded a welcome relief after listening to the reasonings of well-meaning friends, who had seemed to say, "Try to look at your misfortune in the light that *I* do, and it will seem less hard to bear." But this friend rather told her, "I cannot remove the suffering, but I suffer with you."

Soothed by his fellow-feeling, she turned, after a while, to speak of the mercies that were still

accorded to her,—spoke hopefully of the peace she might yet have with her two children, and mentioned the kindness she had met with in grateful terms.

He replied: "I do not agree with those who complain that there is a want of *kindness* in this world, even among the worldly. Surely we have all met with much; and we should take it kindly as it is meant. If those who give us kindness do not truly understand us, and give sympathy besides, we must not blame them; they know it only by name, and have it not to give."

"I have felt the truth of the distinction," she answered, "and I hope it has led me to trust in something better than *human* sympathy; otherwise, during all my trial, I must have felt utterly alone."

With the same hesitation of manner, he replied, "Certainly, Madam; there are depths in the heart into which no human eye can reach. With its bitterness, no less than with its joy, the 'stranger intermeddleth not.' The soul lives alone, and it suffers alone. There is but One who can fully understand its wants and satisfy its cravings,—who knows all that we suffer, and fully understands all that we cannot express. Where should we look for help if it were not for the 'Son of consolation?' When the spirit with which we had held sweet communion is withdrawn, what interest, what end would remain, if we might not hear the whispers of His love who regards us with a yet deeper tender-

ness than we ever bestowed on the departed, and who said, long ago, 'Let thy widows trust in me?'"

Finding that she made no answer, he added,—
"How marvellous is the sympathy of Christ! We suffer, and the Head suffers with us, even while we are enduring the very affliction that His love sees to be needful to make us meet for our heavenly inheritance. We suffer in darkness, and sometimes not seeing nor understanding the end, and not being able to conceive the glory that shall follow. But He sees the end from the beginning; He knows how short these years of darkness will soon be to look back upon. Yet in all our *present* affliction He is afflicted, and mourns for us, and with us, over the dangers and sorrows of the way, though every painful step leads us nearer to the place that He has prepared for us, where 'sorrow and sighing shall flee away,' and the redeemed shall rest with Him, 'whose rest shall be glorious.'"

At this moment the two children glided softly into the room. They had been out for their walk, and had brought some snowdrops for their mother. During her long illness they had been taught quietness, and all their movements had become habitually subdued. But with all this gentleness they showed a delight on seeing Mr. Raeburn which touched her heart. She felt how great that kindness must have been which gave them confidence to climb about him and importune him for the little

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childish pleasures that he had promised to procure for them.

The spring of the year opened unusually early; the blossoms and leaves were out nearly a month before their usual time. April came in like May; and Mrs. Greyson recovered sufficient strength to be able to attend the church services, and walk along the quiet country lanes, talking to her children of their dead father.


CHAPTER II.

THE LITTLE TEA-MAKER.

FOR the first few months of Mr. Raeburn's residence in his new parish, he occupied rooms in an old farm-house ; but at Christmas he took a lease of a fine but rather dilapidated place, the garden of which ran along by the side of the church-yard. The children, who had free leave to follow him wherever he went, took great delight in wandering about through the grand old rooms and corridors, and in watching the progress of the work-people. The house was a red brick structure, but its original brightness had become subdued to an umber hue. The west front was half covered with branching ivy, which climbed over some part of the roof, and mantled the chimneys. The lawn was adorned with a fountain and a sun-dial, from which, as from two centres, a multitude of small flower beds branched off. There the children spent many an hour watching him, while he pulled up the worthless plants, and put in bulbs and young trees. But the part of the garden on which he bestowed the

greatest pains, was that which lay before the windows of one particular sitting-room in the south side of the house. It was a pretty room, opening by French windows into a terrace, which led down by stone steps into the garden. There was a long balcony over the terrace, supported on stone pillars, over which beautiful creeping plants were trained ; and their slight pleasant shade cast a gloom over the room during the afternoon, when it would otherwise have been oppressively hot. This apartment was wainscotted with oak. The floor was partially covered with a square of Turkey carpet, and the cornice and chimney-piece were carved in a rich pattern, representing bunches of grapes twisted with ears of corn, and tied together with a carved ribbon, on which was written the motto, " I Dreux to me honour ;" for the house had formerly belonged to an ancient Norman French family, of the name of Dreux, and in almost every room their arms were quaintly carved in oak of deep rich colour, very few shades removed from black. Mr. Raeburn furnished this room in the taste of two hundred years ago. Even the plants in pots, which he set on the steps of the terrace, were stately and old-fashioned, and consisted principally of large hydrangias, tall hollyhocks, princes'-feathers, cox-combs, campanulas, and myrtles.

By the middle of spring the house was as neat and clean inside as a single gentleman's housekeeper could make it. But Mr. Raeburn, though as good a master as ever lived, was not perfect—who is ?



and one of the qualities which, in his housekeeper's opinion, stood between him and perfection, was his terrible untidiness. He stained the carpets with red mud, for want of care in wiping his shoes; he left her beautiful bright poker in the fire till all their polish was burnt off; and he had a bad habit of opening any book he chanced to see, and putting his hands into it, as often as not with the strings hanging out. Besides which, he continually mislaid his papers, books, and other possessions, and thought nothing of turning out the contents of his drawers on the floor in his search for them. But untidiness, the housekeeper knew, was a failing common to most bachelors; so she put to rights after him with great resignation, merely remarking to her subordinates, when she found a more than ordinary uproar among his papers, "that to see how he went on, one would think he expected nature, or Providence, or some of them fine folks, to put to rights after him, instead of a lone woman that had but one pair of hands."

Every Monday evening, Marion and Wilfred came to drink tea with Mr. Raeburn. Immediately before their arrival they proceeded straight into the kitchen; for it was a kitchen after all, though as clean as the study, and ornamented with a square of Kidderminster carpet, as well as with several gaudy tea-trays, the special property of the housekeeper, one of which was the subject of unceasing admiration to the two children. It represented a striped

tiger issuing from a small pink temple, and making its way towards a remarkably blue pond, whereon floated a thing like a Noah's Ark, made of wicker work. In this thing, supposed to be some kind of boat or raft, sat two ladies, with their heads on one side, fanning themselves with things like battledores, while a fiery gentleman was taking deliberate aim at the tiger with a weapon something like a spud.

When Marion and Wilfred had sufficiently admired this tray, they proceeded to toast three rounds of toast—one for each of themselves and one for Mr. Raeburn. This duty over, they amused themselves with the cat, and watched the cuckoo clock in the corner, sometimes pulling down the weights to make it six o'clock the sooner. When things got to this pass, Mr. Raeburn always came out and took them into his study, to sit with him till the tea came in, with the three rounds of toast, one for each of the company. Marion always made the tea. At first, when they began to spend their Monday evenings with Mr. Raeburn, she required a great deal of assistance, and did no more than put in sugar and milk at her own discretion. He was extremely careful on other points to make things fair between the children, but in making the tea he admitted of no such thing as turns,—or what came to the same thing, it was always Marion's turn.

Marion paid great attention to his instructions, and by the time she was eight years old she had arrived at a proficiency in the art that was quite

marvellous for one so young. Indeed, she was so much at home in exercising it, and looked so sweet and happy, that as he sat gazing at her during this particular period of his life, he often conjured up another image in her place—the image of a lady whose cheeks were not so blooming, but whose clear dark eyes and brown hair would not have suffered by contrast with hers.

One night, when tea had been over some time, and Mr. Raeburn had already concocted with his pocket-knife a whole fleet of ships cut out of walnut shells, and had also drawn a succession of landscapes in the blank leaves of his pocket-book, each consisting of one cottage in the distance, with two doors and one window, and a pond in the foreground full of ducks and ducklings, each quite as large as the cottage.—And when he had altered them to suit the fancy of the possessor, by filling the atmosphere with flying ducks, and when he had told them several stories, and they had begun to get rather sleepy, he took Marion on his knees, and while she rested her head on his shoulder, and began to sing some nursery rhymes, he allowed his fancy quite to run away with him, and transport him, like the gentleman in the song, “over the hills and far away.” The particular hills he went over in this excursion were the Malvern hills, and he alighted at the door of a pretty house, where in a parlour reading, sat the same young lady with dark eyes.

She was very much younger than Mr. Raeburn,

for she could scarcely have reached her twenty-third year; but the vision went on to show that she was delighted to see him; and it is impossible to say how far he might have pursued it, if Marion had not suddenly lifted up her face and said, "Uncle,"—he had taught her to call him so,—“Uncle, who makes tea for you on other nights, when we are not here? What do you do all by yourself?”

The words entered his ears and changed the scene of his reverie, though they had not power to wake him from it. He immediately recalled the sweet image of his little tea-maker, with her childish pride in the office, and let her features change and give place to those of the dark-eyed Euphemia, whom he hoped soon to see at his board; he imagined himself reading to her in the evening, and fancied how pleasantly she would speak to the cottagers and the children. Then he began to consider the fourteen years' difference between her age and his, and wondered whether they would make it less easy for her to enter fully into his pursuits and for him to make her happy. He was going out the next day; in three weeks he hoped to return; by that time the country would be looking its best, for the orchards would be in full blossom and the hedges in their first fresh green. Marion had dropped her head when she found he did not answer, and had gone on softly singing to herself; but presently the same thought struck her again, and she repeated

her question,—“Uncle, what do you do all those nights when we are not here?”

Mr. Raeburn woke up from his reverie with a start, and, smoothing her hair, inquired, “What did you say, my pretty?”

Marion repeated her words once more, upon which Mr. Raeburn replied, that he certainly had been obliged to spend a great deal of his time alone,—a great deal more than he liked, and he often felt very lonely. He then went on and gave such a dismal picture of his solitary life, his sitting at tea alone, and being obliged to make it himself, that Marion’s little heart was pained for him, and her eyes filled with tears.

Didn’t he think he could get some one to come and make tea for him every night? she inquired.

Mr. Raeburn, as if the idea was quite new to him, took a minute to consider of it, and then said, he thought he could; he was almost sure of it. In fact, he intended to see about it very soon.

So Marion was satisfied, and did not trouble herself to ask any more questions, merely remarking, that if he did not remember to tell the new tea-maker (who was at present a mere abstract idea in her mind)—if he did not tell her to be very careful with the cream-jug she would certainly break it, for it was cracked already.

But Mr. Raeburn, to her great surprise, replied, that it did not matter about that, for he had sent to London for a new tea-pot and cream-jug made of

silver, and that she should see them some day and make tea in them herself, if the new tea-maker liked, which he thought she would.

They were still discussing the new tea equipage when their nurse came to fetch them home; and Marion, whose sleepy feelings went off in the open air, related the conversation to her mother with great glee.

"Mamma, Uncle Raeburn says, that *perhaps* I shall make tea out of his beautiful new tea-pot."


"Did he tell you who was coming to make tea with it every night?" asked her mother, with a smile.

"No," said Marion, shaking her head; "but I dare say she is much older than I, for he said, if *she liked*, I might; and he thought she would."

This was on the evening of Easter Monday,—Mr. Raeburn was going out after morning service the next day. Easter had fallen very late this year, and the weather was unusually fine for the season; the trees had already put out their leaves, and the lane sides were yellow with primroses.

Mrs. Greyson lingered in the church after service with her children till the last of the rustic congregation had withdrawn, then, going out with them to the two cedar-trees, she sat down to wait for Mr. Raeburn, close to her husband's grave.

It had never been a sorrowful place for *them*; the dead father was not connected in their minds with any mournful images; they thought of him



either asleep in his grave,—a smooth place and green, and quiet within; or else sitting in heaven in the presence of the Redeemer, and of all the good men and women whom they had read of in the Bible.


Exceedingly inquisitive, like many other children, about the employments and happiness of the separate state, they had listened with earnest wonder to every symbol put forward in Scripture to give an impression or image of the peace and the aspect of that land which is very far off.

They had no painful knowledge of death to make it a mournful subject; they knew that the dead in Christ should rise, for it was written on his tomb, and had often been explained to them from their earliest years; thus, when they thought of him in his deep, narrow bed, it was always as he had looked when he was alive, lying in a sleep from which he was to be awakened by that voice which will reach the dead. From year to year their thoughts became less distinct about him and their recollections more vague, but still he was always the same dear papa who had loved them so much, —who had liked to have them with him, and had prayed God to bless them a few minutes before he died.

To their mother, time, which softens all sorrow, had brought something more than the passive acquiescence which visits their hearts who look upon the dispensations of God's providence simply

as misfortunes which they must bear as they best can; she had learned to consider all God's dealings with her, even the most afflictive, as the evidences of a heavenly Father's love, who has promised his children that all things shall work together for their good.

It was a beautiful morning, and as she sat watching her two children, the treasures of her life, and looking at the beautiful landscape spread out before her, she pondered on the text which had been the subject of the morning's sermon,—“All things are yours.” It recurred to her first, as she observed the extreme beauty of everything around her. There is a kind of natural gratitude which arises spontaneously in the heart when it is impressed by any unusual beauty or grandeur in the face of nature, and the natural mind often mistakes this feeling for true devotional aspirations after the great Maker and Founder of nature; but, in the renewed mind, such indefinite delight and awe are exchanged for grateful love to Him “who giveth us all things richly to enjoy,” and who has not only in his revealed Word taught us many things by symbols drawn from the external world, thus making every season and every scene testify of Him, but has made the place of his children's pilgrimage beautiful, and filled it with objects that delight the eye, as if his bounty could never be satisfied with pouring out kindness on those whom his love has redeemed, with heaping upon them the



treasures both of nature and redemption, and saying to them, "All things are yours."

Pondering on this subject, she forgot to observe how silent the children were, and how intently they were watching her face; but at length the striking of the church clock recalled her to herself, and she asked if they were tired, and whether they wished to go home. They were very happy, they said, and they wished to stay till Mr. Raeburn came: they knew he would soon pass through the church-yard, for the groom had been leading his horse up and down the lane for some time; he was going to a village about five miles off to meet the north coach, and though they had taken leave of him, they wished to see him again.

Marion and Wilfred were tying up some little bunches of daisies for their mamma; when they had finished they laid them on her knee, and Wilfred ran off to play; Marion watched him till he disappeared behind the church; then turning to her mother she said, as if the subject had puzzled her for some time—

"Mamma, what are toilsome years?"

"Toilsome years," repeated her mother gently, and wondering where the child had met with the expression.

"Yes, mamma, I read it on Miss Dreux's monument, that young lady who was an heiress. I always read the monuments when I go into the church with Uncle Raeburn."

"What is written on that one?" asked her mother. Marion repeated the lines which had perplexed her—

"God comfort us for all our tears,
That only He has seen,
And shortly end the toilsome years,
Us, and his rest between.

"The love from earth with thee departs
That thou didst with thee bring;
Thou wert unto so many hearts
The *most* beloved thing.

"But who remembrance would forego
That thy loved face had seen,
Or let his mourning cease, nor know
That thou hadst ever been."

"Do you know who Miss Dreux was?" asked her mother.

"Yes, mamma, it says on her tomb, 'Elinor, the beloved and only child of Colonel Dreux and Maria his wife: who died in her sixteenth year.' But what made their years toilsome?"

"Did you never hear this life compared to a journey, Marion?"

"O yes, in the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' mamma."

"If you were setting out on a journey with delightful companions, and friends to love you and take care of you, the little trouble and weariness of the way would not seem very hard to bear—you would not mind being tired, perhaps, in playing and talking, you might forget that your feet ached a little; but if you had to go by yourself, and

these pleasant companions were all gone away, and the road was very lonely and dark, then you would begin to feel the toil of the journey and to wish it was over—don't you think you should, Marion?"

Marion glanced at her father's grave, and then looked earnestly in her mother's face. During the last few moments she had dimly perceived, with the sympathy of a child, that the sadness of her mother was not all occasioned by the fate of the beautiful girl, whose marble statue with its listless features lay so quietly reclined upon her tomb.

Kind and affectionate feelings had very early exhibited themselves in her conduct and that of her little brother—the same feeling of longing desire to "show some kindness to the dead," which had often prompted them to come (as if to some duty which must not be neglected), to sit by their father's grave to bear him company; and had often filled them with remorseful sorrow, if they had neglected to do so for a longer time than usual—that same feeling which, in older hearts, gratifies itself in spending care and love upon their living representatives, now sprung up in her mind towards her mother, and touched her with a tender regret, such as will sometimes visit a child's heart at the sight of habitual melancholy, or any continuous sadness—a state of mind which is always mysterious to them, and of all others the least easy to understand.

Marion perceived some application in her mother's words which she could not express, and began to wonder whether her mother's were toilsome years, because if they were, she thought when she was grown older she would comfort her.

The "desire of a man is his kindness;" this is still more strikingly true of the desire of a child; there is something lovely in the dim anxiety that haunts them when some fancied evil, some dreamed of danger hangs over the head of a father or a mother.

The morning was slipping away, Marion soon forgot her anxious speculations and began to make a daisy necklace. The starlings and rooks that lived in the steeple were busy and noisy, the one darting backwards and forwards in a straight, steady flight,—the others poisoning themselves and floating in the air with sticks in their beaks. The noonday air became warmer and more still, the red buds of the chesnut-trees began to unfold their crumpled leaves, and Mr. Raeburn's favourite horse, as he was led up and down with Wilfred on his back, ceased altogether to expect his master.

But he came at last in a great hurry, and waded through the long grass to wish Mrs. Greyson good by; he had lingered in his house till the last minute, and was afraid he should miss the coach; but he was in very good spirits, and told Marion, as he lifted her up to kiss her, that he hoped in three weeks to bring back the new tea-maker.

The three weeks passed very happily with

Marion and Wilfred. They took long walks with their mamma, and made collections of out-of-door treasures,—hoards of fir-apples, red catkins which strewn the ground under the poplar-trees, cup mosses, and striped shells. There was a hollow tree in Mr. Raeburn's garden, where they were in the habit of depositing these natural curiosities, together with balls of packthread, last year's nests, bits of empty honey-comb, and any other articles of *vertù* which it was not lawful to carry into the house. The children thought the new tea-maker was a long time coming; they went with their mother in Mr. Raeburn's house to inspect the arrangements for his return; they admired the plants in pots which had been set all along the terrace, and the cold collation on the table, but most of all, they were delighted to see the servants in their white gloves and white ribbons, and the house-keeper in her green silk gown.

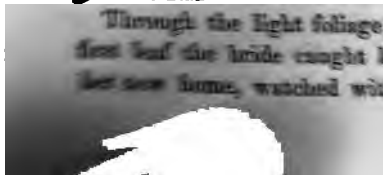
It was about five o'clock in the afternoon: every cottage door was open; for if there had been no wish to welcome the Rector home, it is certain that no cottage girl or cottage wife would miss the sight of a bride. So all the doors were open, and all the gardens were full of flowers, bright ones, and large, such as cottager's love, borage for the bees, tall fox-gloves, cabbage-roses, peonies, lilacs, wallflowers, crown-imperials, and guelder-roses.

Little Marion, with a white muslin frock and satin sash, was standing with Wilfred at their

mother's gate, under the shade of a hawthorn tree, a soft shower of the falling blossoms kept alighting on her hair, till it looked as if it had been sown with seed pearls. The air had given a more than ordinary lustre to her fair complexion, though her blue eyes retained their usual expression of serenity and peace.

The church clock was striking five when the Rector and his young wife turned the slope of the last hill which divided them from the village, and as the carriage advanced, saw it lying beneath them half buried in trees, with the church spire and the two cedars, and the long sunny lane which led down to them. It was a beautiful evening ; never had the scattered village looked more picturesque, the meadows and pasture-lands greener, or the little winding river more tranquil.

The chesnut-trees were in blossom, and the lane was chequered all over with the rays of the afternoon sun slanting through them. No snow had ever made the hedges whiter than they were now in the full pride of their millions of blossoms—white as the bride's veil, they seemed almost weighed down with the multitudes that adorned them. All the orchards were white too, and a slow shower kept perpetually falling from the branches to the grass below.



Through the light foliage of lime-trees in their first leaf the bride caught her earliest glimpse of her new home, watched with earnest and pleased

attention every change in the beautiful landscape, and looked at the far-off range of blue hills, so faint in outline that it was not easy to say where they melted into the sky.

She uttered no word as they drew nearer, but kept her eyes fixed upon the lovely scene; the hanging woods and hop-gardens, the corn-fields and apple-orchards; nearer at hand the sloping glades, where dapple cows were chewing the cud in the evening sunshine, and for a background a group of pure white clouds, small and distinct, lying as quietly in the deep sky as a flock of lambs on a green hill-side.

The Rector watched her face as she gazed on the neighbourhood of her home, and he read in her dark eyes their tribute of admiration for its beauty; but not a word she spoke; her face, always pale, looked paler from the agitation of her feelings, and made her long dark hair seem darker than before.

So going slowly on they soon passed out of view of Marion and Wilfred, and turned into the garden-gate which led to their own house, drawing up at the porch, where all the servants, with the old housekeeper at their head, were waiting to receive them.

She was a sweet lady, the Rector's wife; they all said so before she had been long among them. She soon paid visits to some of the cottagers with her husband, and then they too said she was a sweet lady. Marion and Wilfred quite agreed with them.

for she spoke to them so gently and tenderly ; she wished them to come and drink tea as usual on Monday evening, and she gratified Marion's desire to make tea out of the new teapot. Afterwards, sitting under the balcony with Mr. Raeburn, she let them water the flowers which were ranged upon the stone steps. But she was very silent, and her face was generally grave, though sometimes a quiet smile stole over it and lighted it for a moment. Her voice was low, and she had a habit of contemplating the faces of those about her, sometimes dropping her work on her knees, and looking for a long time together at her husband or her little guests with affectionate and pleased attention. There was a great deal of repose expressed in her features, and the same trait was equally obvious in her character.

Her dark eyes were clear, but not sparkling ; all her movements were quiet. Her affections were strong and absorbing. She was one of those not very uncommon people who supply every defect in the character of those they love from the fair ideal they have formed of them in their own minds.

Her happiness was relative rather than positive. As the moon has no brightness of her own, but shines by light reflected on her by the sun, so she seemed to have no happiness of her own and from herself ; her happiness was reflected on her from others, and waxed and waned with theirs.

After Mr. Raeburn's marriage his reserve became very much modified, and he gradually dropped

many of his singular habits. His wife proved truly a helpmeet for him. Under her influence he unconsciously became more animated, and both in his parish and at home his character seemed to assume a different aspect. Marion and Wilfred, however, saw less of him than before his marriage. They were instructed not to haunt his footsteps nor importune him to take them with him. This they felt a great privation, especially as their mother's increasing delicacy of health, for some months after the bridal, confined her entirely to her couch. As long as the summer lasted they could scramble about alone among the coppices and wooded dells with which the neighbourhood abounded. But fate, in the shape of a tutor, separated them before the autumn was half over, and every morning the boy was mounted on a shaggy little pony, and sent off to the neighbouring parish, where lived a gentleman, Maidley by name, who had several sons, and was glad to receive Wilfred among them as a day-boarder.

Thus he was fortunately preserved from becoming a dunce, and his sister from becoming a romp.

Will. Greyson was a very droll little boy, quite a character in his way. He had an inexhaustible fund of good humour, a vivid red and white complexion, and a face which was such an odd compound of simplicity and shrewdness, that it was almost impossible to look at him without laughing.

From his earliest years he had shown a strong bent for mechanics, and great curiosity about screws, locks, wheels, &c. Before he was six years old he had made himself personally acquainted with the inside of almost every cuckoo clock in the parish, and he had two incorrigibly bad old clocks of his own, which were an endless source of amusement to him, and which he made to perform all sorts of strange evolutions, and, by means of belts and wires, to peal all hours with alarming vigour.

As he grew older he soon extended his knowledge of what he called the "insides of things" to the church organ, and could not only tune musical instruments, but play upon several. He also concocted several rude alarms, and invented a sundial, which, in the shape of an old clock-face, might often be seen protruding from his bed-room window on a sunny day, to the intense astonishment of passers-by.

The winter passed very cheerily to the two families; but in the spring, as Mrs. Greyson's health did not improve, a visit to the sea-side was recommended for her. The children were delighted with the prospect of going to the sea, and the more so as one of their aunts, with her children, was to meet them there.

They looked forward to this their first journey with the vague delight which arises from ignorance of what the splendid sea will be like, and a wonder how it can be possible to walk beside it without

danger of being drowned, when the great waves are rising and foaming as they do in pictures.

The sea, after all, did not answer the expectation they had formed of it. Strange to say, they declared that it was not so big as they had expected; and they wrote word to Mr. Raeburn, when they had been there a week, that they had seen no breakers yet, nor "anything particular."

The first month they were very happy, though they missed their gardens more than they had thought possible. The second month was extremely fine, and their aunt, Mrs. Paton, arrived to visit them, with her four children. This was more delightful than can be imagined by any but country-bred children brought up in quietude and exclusion. They were delighted with their cousins,—they almost worshipped them,—particularly the two elder girls, Dora and Elizabeth, who were clever, and older than themselves. The two little ones were delightful playthings, and they spent many a happy hour with them in collecting sea-weeds and shells, and washing and arranging their spoils.

At the end of the second month, their mother one morning received a letter which seemed to give her so much pleasure, that, though they were ready dressed to go out, they lingered in the room till she had done reading it. They knew it was from their uncle (so Mr. Raeburn was always called), and they thought it must be to tell some particularly good news;—either that he had found some

wild bees' nests, or perhaps that the gooseberries were ripe in the garden, or, better than all, that he was coming to see them.

They did not mistake the expression of their mother's face; she was greatly pleased, and with better cause than any they had assigned to her, for this letter was to announce the important news of the birth of twin children, a son and a daughter.

For several days after this nothing was talked of but the two dear little babies, and the post-office was visited daily for tidings respecting them. These were always favourable, and written in high spirits. The carpenter's wife, who had had twins in the winter, had been sent for to come and see them, and she had declared (a rare instance of disinterested generosity) that they were finer children than hers, by a deal !

Mr. Raeburn himself, who was allowed to be a tolerable judge of infant humanity, gave it to Mrs. Greyson as his impartial opinion that they were very satisfactory children, and had eyes as dark as their mother's.

Marion and Wilfred were delighted ; here were some children for them to pet and patronize when they were parted from their little cousins. They were urgent with their mother to go home directly, but this was not to be thought of, 'for she was now gaining strength, and as the weather became warmer, ventured out daily to saunter on the beach

with her sister, and sit under the shadow of the cliffs.

Another month passed. Their mother began to grow quite strong ; sometimes she had a colour ; she seldom lay on the sofa, and could walk out with them every day. She had the society of their aunt also ; but they began to observe, that in spite of all this she was not in good spirits. She often sighed deeply, and their uncle's letters always made her shed tears ; yet when they asked about the twins she said they were well ; and as they could think of no other reason for this change in her, they thought it must be that she was longing to go home.

Nothing but their desire to see the twins could have made Marion and her brother willing to leave the sea and their cousins ; as it was, the parting caused many tears on both sides, though it was a consolation to be promised that the next summer, if all was well, their cousins should come and visit them at their own home. During the long journey the conviction that their mother was unhappy forced itself again upon their minds. She did not seem to participate in their delight when they talked of Mrs. Raeburn ; on the contrary, they saw several times during the day that she had difficulty in restraining her tears, and that when they spoke to her, she answered with peculiar gravity.

It was on the afternoon of a lovely October day that Mrs. Grayson returned home. The yellow leaves in continual showers kept falling from the

trees ; the lane was so thickly covered, that as they passed along the sound of the carriage wheels was deadened.

The air was perfectly still, and everything was steeped in the yellow sunlight peculiar to the finest hours of our autumnal day. There was a thin warm haze over the distance, which gave a dreamy tranquillity—a kind of sleepy repose to the landscape, and while it shed a slight indistinctness upon it, left the power for imagination to work upon deepening the hollows, lagging along the course of the river, and throwing the woods with their changing lines to a greater apparent distance.

Marion and Wilfred saw with delight the multitude of horse-chesnuds, acorns, and fir-apples that lay among the leaves, and they had no sooner alighted at their own door, and spoken to the servants, than they ran into the garden to collect some of these treasures, and see how their plants were flourishing. Presently, while they were running about, with the utmost delight examining every nook and cranny where they were accustomed to play, their nurse came out and told them that Mr. Raeburn was come, and their mamma wished them to leave off playing, and come and see him.

They ran in at once, and, amid their caresses, began to overwhelm him with questions about Euphemia and the children, asking whether they might see them to-morrow, whether they might nurse them, and what were their names.

Mr. Raeburn answered all their questions with a quiet gravity, which soon checked their glee. There was a tone in his voice that they were not accustomed to—something in his manner which they did not remember and could not understand. He seemed pleased to see them, and evidently meant to stay and take tea with their Mamma. Marion began to ask whether Mrs. Raeburn was coming too, but a glance from her mother checked her; upon which Mr. Raeburn said, "It is of no consequence—the question was a very natural one:" and then, drawing her towards him with his usual tenderness, assured her that she should see the babies to-morrow.

Marion and Wilfred were soon sleepy and tired; they went to bed shortly after tea, leaving Mr. Raeburn sitting in one corner of the sofa, with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed upon the ground. He had not said one word since tea, either to them or their mother; and perceiving that something unusual was the matter, they were quick to observe that, as the housemaid carried away the tea-urn, she cast upon him a look of pity that could not be mistaken.

This same servant, who was a widow, came shortly afterwards into the nursery, and while the nurse was attending upon Marion, began to talk to her in mysterious whispers. Marion caught a sentence here and there, which filled her with wonder.

"Never takes any notice of them now, poor little dears—quite out of her mind."

"Mistress told her something of it while we were at the sea," said the nurse.

Marion looked up, and they talked of something else, but soon fell back upon the old theme, and spoke in whispers.

"Yes," Marion heard, "they sent for me that night to see if I could persuade her to give up the little girl. She had it on her lap. They had set the bassinet beside her, in hopes she would put the baby in, and as soon as she saw me, she says, 'Watson, everything seems to be floating away.' 'Oh, you'll be better, Ma'am, when you've had some sleep. Give me the baby; I can take care of it. You know I am a mother myself,' I said. 'No,' she says, 'I'm afraid if I give it to you I shall never see it again.' So she looked into the bassinet, and she says, very quiet-like, 'I thought I had two of them; perhaps it was only a dream; but I love this little one that's left!'"

"Hush!" said the nurse; "Miss is listening."

They then paused for a while, till she seemed attending to other things, and the next thing Marion heard was, "Dr. Wilmot kept making signs to me to do all I could, so I said, 'Let me set the bassinet by you on the sofa, Ma'am, and then you can lay her in, and watch her.' Well, she laid the child in it, and as soon as she looked another way, they carried it out of sight."

"Very strange she should know you, and not her own husband," said the nurse.

"Yes," returned the other, "and he so changed in a few days that you would have thought he had had a long illness."

Then followed a few sentences that Marion could not understand. "Never takes notice of any one now; quite out of her mind." "Then it all seemed to come on in a few days," said the nurse.

"Yes, and they only six weeks old, poor little dears."

"Does Mr. Raeburn take much notice of them?" Marion did not hear the answer to this question, but part of the housemaid's next remark reached her.

"He said, 'O my dear Euphemia, do you know me?—can you answer me?' And I took up her hand, and turned her face gently towards him. She looked like a person in a dream; and I said, 'Look, Ma'am, don't you see Mr. Raeburn?—don't you see your husband?' I thought she looked at him rather earnestly; at last she said, 'That's the clergyman,' and fell to thinking. In a few minutes she says to herself, 'And yet,' she says, 'I must have had them once; I think I heard one of them cry this morning.'"

"Poor dear!" said the nurse; and then Marion went to bed, and dreamed of the two sweet babies whose mamma was forgetting them.

The next morning, when Wilfred was gone to

school on his pony, Mrs. Greyson told Marion she was going to the rectory, and she might come with her. Mr. Raeburn met them in the garden, and went up with them to the nursery, which was at the top of the house—a large white-washed room, with casement windows, half-covered with trailing ivy. Marion's delight at sight of the two children asleep in their pretty cradles, aroused him from his despondency, and he said to her mother in a cheerful tone, "I have been very anxious for you to see them; I hope you think they look well and thriving."

Mrs. Greyson's reply was satisfactory, and in a short time he asked her to come down with him and see his wife.

Marion was left in the nursery, with the infants and their nurses: presently one of them awoke, and she was too much absorbed in watching the process of dressing it in an embroidered cloak and satin bonnet to notice her mother's protracted absence. She came at last, and taking Marion down stairs, stood still for a few minutes in the hall to wipe away her tears. The child asked no questions, but remained looking from her mother to Mr. Raeburn, till the latter said, "I wish you would leave Marion with me for the rest of the day, my dear Mrs. Greyson. I think I should like to have her."

"Certainly," returned her mother, who had quite regained her composure, "and I will send for her in the evening."

Marion was pleased to stay, and walked to the



garden gates with her mother and Mr. Raeburn, amusing herself with watching the fall of the poplar leaves, which lay in such masses in the lane, that the movement of her mother's gown as she walked raised a little crowd of them, to flutter round her like a tribe of yellow butterflies.

All through the morning Marion asked no question about the unseen Euphemia, but while Mr. Raeburn sat writing in his study she amused herself with books in one corner ; after which she went out with him as of old, and they called at several cottages : but though he met with a very warm welcome, and the health of the twins was inquired after with great tenderness, no direct questions were asked about Euphemia, though there was that in the manner of some of the poor women which said plainly for him, as Job said for himself, " O that it was with thee as in months past, as in the days when God preserved thee ; when his candle shined upon thy head, and when by his light thou didst walk through darkness."

After their return from this walk, Marion went into the nursery again, and, to her great delight, was permitted by the nurses to sit in a little chair, and nurse each of the twins in turn.

Two o'clock was Mr. Raeburn's dinner hour, and then a servant came to fetch her down, saying that her uncle was waiting. Marion wondered whether Euphemia would come and dine with them, or whether she and her uncle were to be quite alone.

She lingered at the door of the dining-room, half hoping, half fearing that she should hear the sound of her voice. But Mr. Raeburn, who had been standing at the window, turned when he heard her step, and leading her in, said, as if he had read her thoughts, "There is no one here ; come in, my pretty ; it was very kind of mamma to let you stay with me to-day."

Marion came in, and during dinner began to talk of the sea-side, of the ships and the shells, till Mr. Raeburn was beguiled of some of his heaviness by her gentle companionship, and afterwards sat listening to her conjectures as to how soon the twins would begin to know her, and when they would be able to walk, till the old servant, who was watching his master's face, blessed the day that brought her home again. This went on till the dessert and wine were cleared away, and till the sunbeams had crept round to that side of the old house, and were playing on a pair of lustres which were held up by bronze figures on the sideboard, and covering the ceiling, the walls, and Marion's white frock with fragments of little trembling rainbows. Mr. Raeburn took out his watch, and finding it nearly four o'clock, glanced at Marion, as if trying to decide something. At length he said, "I am going now to sit for a while with your aunt ; would you like to come with me, Marion ?"

Marion assented instantly, put her hand in his, and let him lead her through the well-ordered

garden, till they approached the morning-room by the stone terrace outside. Mrs. Keane, who had been Marion's nurse, opened the French-window when she saw them ascending the steps, and then retired into a corner and took up a piece of needle-work.

Marion cast a hurried glance round the room, and seeing Euphemia seated on a sofa, looking much as usual, was about to start forward and speak to her, when something in the calm face arrested her steps, and, while Mr. Raeburn walked forward and sat down beside her, she stood within the window, gazing at her with anxious perplexity.

It was obvious that she was perfectly unconscious of their presence; her lips were moving, but no sounds were audible; the expression of her face told of a calm abstraction, a depth of serenity and blindness to external things which nothing could possibly reach to disturb. But she had something in her hands,—she was twisting (strange sight for an intelligent child)—she was twisting a long skein of silk in and out and backwards and forwards among her fingers.

Marion looked at "her uncle," and he beckoned her to approach. It was a low sofa on which Euphemia sat, and she was reclining on one elbow upon the pillows; a large ottoman stood close to her feet. And when Mr. Raeburn spoke to Marion, and said, "Come close to her,—see if she will know you," Marion came and knelt on the ottoman,

and, putting her arms round Mrs. Raeburn's waist, said, in her soft sweet voice, "Aunt, aunt, look at me; I am come home again."

"Call her *Euphemia*," said Mr. Raeburn.

Marion's attitude had a little interfered with the movement of Euphemia's hands, as she went on twisting the skein, and she put out her hand and gently tried to push her face away. As she did this their eyes met, and hers assumed for the moment a less dreamy expression. She dropped the silk, and taking Marion's head between her hands, looked at her with great attention, and then uttered her name in the inexpressive tone of a person talking in sleep.

"Euphemia," said the child, as the two small hands drew her still nearer, "listen to me;—do listen to me. I have been to see the babies"

But Euphemia's mind was sinking again into one of its long, listless reveries, and, having drawn Marion's head on to her bosom, she remained gazing out of the windows at the sunset clouds; then folding one arm round the child, as she knelt beside her, she presently began with the same dream-like tranquillity to pass her hands among the long waves of her luxuriant hair. At last, to the astonishment of her husband, she lifted up her face, with an expression of evident pleasure, disengaged a yellow poplar-leaf, which had doubtless fallen on Marion's head as she passed through the garden, and held it out to him with a smile.

It was a long time since he had seen her smile, and it sent a thrill of pleasure to his heart. Wishing, if it were possible, to rouse her sufficiently to make her speak to him, he then addressed her with the utmost tenderness, entreating her to look at him, and saying, "Let me hear the sound of your voice once more, even if you say no more than my name. Let me hear my name from your lips once more."

But the voice to which she was so well accustomed seemed, by its very familiarity, less capable of penetrating through the deep dream of her existence; for when Marion lifted up her face and added her entreaties to his, she was again aroused to attention, and said, in reference to her words, which had been a repetition of Mr. Raeburn's entreaties that she would look at her husband:—

"My husband's dead." And then added, with a sigh and a touching tone of quiet regret, "It was a pity they laid him in the grave so soon. I should like to have kissed him, before they took him away."

Mr. Raeburn hastily arose and paced the floor with uncontrolable agitation. He had endured for weeks past to sit by her side and hold her hand in his, while she remained unconscious of his presence and uttered not a word; but now, she had been on the very brink of resuming some kind of intercourse with him, and it appeared to him that if he

could only find the right chord to touch she might be won back to him. It was an additional bitterness to him, and one that he had not hitherto suffered, to find that his influence was even less with her than that of a happy child, who felt little pain at the sight of her malady.

Forgetting for the moment his usual self-control, he again returned to her, and entreated, commanded, adjured her, if possible, to give him some sign that she was conscious of his existence. Marion wept and trembled, and the nurse said what she could to calm him, but the silent object of all this pain sat still in her place, and resumed the coloured silk which she had thrown aside, turning and twisting it among her fingers.

It was not long before he recovered some degree of self-command, came up to his wife, and kissed her passive cheek; then he hastily drew Marion away from her, took her out of the room, and left her alone in the dining-room to dry her tears and wonder at the strange scene she had witnessed.

She had looked back as she left the room, and the image of Euphemia's face as she then saw it could never be forgotten;—the peaceful features, the quiet attitude, the sealed-up senses,—not to be reached by love or fear, or touched by the passionate entreaties of the husband who had hitherto been so dear to her.

That night Marion made tea again, as she had so



often done before Mr. Raeburn's marriage. She was quiet, and he was much more silent than usual, but he liked to have her with him ; and from that time, whenever he felt more than commonly desolate, he used to send for her to spend the day with him and talk to him about his children.

CHAPTER III.

THE TWIN CHILDREN.

MARION became now again the constant companion of Mr. Raeburn's walks, and as the twin children grew older they were often added to the party.

They were both very lovely infants, and strongly resembled their mother, having the same soft, dark eyes, and long lashes, and the same tranquillity of expression. Never having had a day's illness from their birth, they delighted their father by their rapid growth and dawning intelligence; and, as he held them one on each knee, he often pictured to himself the comfort they would be to him when they grew older.

During the first year of their lives their mother seemed occasionally conscious of their existence; and as Mr. Raeburn took care that they should often be carried into her presence, he comforted himself with the hope that, if she ever should recover her reason, they would not look upon her as a stranger.

But from month to month her remembrance of

them diminished, her mind became less quiescent, and she would hold long conversations with herself, or with imaginary companions, always wearing the same rapt expression on her face.

Place and scene were supplied by her fancy,—she saw no passing changes; even when one of her own children was held up before her and would smile in her face, stroking her cheeks with its tiny hands, she would suffer, but never return, the baby caress, nor take the least notice of the little open mouth, with its rows of pearly teeth, and the calm dark eyes so like her own.

Thus matters continued with her till they were two years old, when her condition seemed slightly to improve. This improvement was shown by her following the children about the room with her eyes, and seeming to take some slight pleasure in the beauty of the little Euphemia, whose long hair fell in soft waves upon her neck.

Mr. Raeburn had been in the habit of reading to her every morning since her illness, and though he continued the practice for many months without her taking the slightest apparent notice, it was afterwards evident that she retained some expectation of it; for one morning, when he did not pay the usual attention, she manifested considerable restlessness, and at last spoke to her attendant and desired her to call the clergyman,—for since her mind had been disturbed she had always called her husband by this name.

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When he entered she seemed to awake for the moment from the deep trance in which she lived, and as he sat down beside her she laid her hand upon his arm, and addressing him, with the grace and politeness which in her better days she might have shown to some stranger who had shown her a kindness, she thanked him for what she called his attentions to one who had no claim upon them, and requested that, if possible, he would never omit to read to her again.

But here this improvement ceased. He read, but could elicit no remark from her on the chapter, nor any appearance of interest in the prayer with which he generally concluded. Her two children, as soon as they could speak, were taught to call her "Mamma," and early began to manifest considerable affection for her, often attempting to draw their father to the door of the morning-room, and, if they could succeed in inducing him to take them in, standing before her hand in hand, looking up into her face with mingled tenderness and awe, and softly repeating her name.

In the spring of this year Dora and Elizabeth came to visit their cousins ; they were very sprightly and clever, but had not the innocent gentleness of Marion, nor her serene spirits. They were scarcely at home again before she and the twins were attacked with whooping-cough, but of the mildest type, and in spite of the backwardness of the season none of the children seemed to suffer much.

By the end of May they all seemed perfectly recovered. The twins had been removed, at Mrs. Greyson's request, to her house, that she might watch over them more carefully, for their two original nurses had left them, and they were confided to the care of a less-experienced woman. They had returned home about a week, when one morning, while Marion was learning her lessons, Mr. Raeburn came in, and said to her mother,—

"I wish you would come and look at my boy; I do not think he is so well as when he left your house."

"Perhaps the warm weather makes him a little fretful," she answered.

"Yes; I dare say it is that," he replied, as if half-ashamed of his own uneasiness; and then added, with a smile which seemed to deprecate her *ridicule*, "The fact is, he has given me a peculiar glance several times the last few days. I think he looks as if he saw something."

Mrs. Greyson went up stairs and put on her bonnet immediately, but felt that, in all probability, he was enduring perfectly needless anxiety, though she could scarcely wonder at it, considering the circumstances of his case. As they walked towards the rectory she tried to give him this view of the matter, and he appeared so much restored to ease by it that he was even unwilling to allow her to proceed.

She, however, went up with him, into the

nursery, where the little Euphemia, who had just awoke from her morning sleep, was laughing on the nurse's knee, and playing with a toy made of revolving feathers.

She bent over the crib where the other child was sleeping, lifted up his dimpled hand, and remarked to his father that he looked perfectly well. She reminded him that it was but four days since the children had returned home, and that she had seen them twice without remarking any apparent delicacy.

"When did you first observe that he seemed unwell?" she inquired.

"Not till the day before yesterday. No doubt it is only my fancy."

"How very soundly he sleeps," she remarked.

"O, very indeed, Ma'am," said the nurse, who was now dressing her little charge for a walk. "The trouble I've had to wake that child these last few days nobody would believe; but he always wakes so good tempered when I do get him roused."

Mr. Raeburn smiled at this new proof of the health of his boy, but happening to glance at Mrs. Greyson, was disturbed to see her colour change, and her face assume an expression of at least as much anxiety as he had ever felt.

After a momentary pause, she said, quietly, "Does he wake with a crowing noise?"

"He has done, Ma'am, the last few days;

no doubt that's the remains of the hooping-cough."

The nature of his mother's illness flashed across Mrs. Greyson's mind, and she wished for a medical opinion; but fearful of needlessly disturbing his father, and thinking that, after all, she might be mistaken, she stood a short time irresolute, looking at the sleeping child. It was, however, quite needless for her to tell him her anxiety: he had already seen it; and, as if he had instinctively guessed her fears, he said, hurriedly, "I hope you do not think there is anything the matter with the brain?"

"I have no defined thought on the subject," she answered; "the symptoms are so very slight that it would be quite unreasonable to dread the very worst, when we have not even heard a medical opinion."

She had scarcely done speaking, when the child awoke with a sudden start, and the peculiar noise the nurse had mentioned. He seemed good-humoured, but rather heavy. Yet when his father hinted at the propriety of sending for Dr. Wilmot, the physician who attended his mother, Mrs. Greyson assented with a readiness which gave him pain, adding, with assumed cheerfulness, that if there really was nothing the matter, it would be a relief to their minds to hear him say so.

Dr. Wilmot was accordingly sent for. He arrived without much delay, and, after examining the child attentively, and listening to the symptoms,

declined to give any opinion for the present. But Mr. Raeburn saw the glance he exchanged with Mrs. Greyson as he sat at the nursery table writing his prescription, and felt that if he abstained from exciting his fears, it was more out of compassion than from any doubt in his own mind.

For the next week or ten days the symptoms did not, to an inexperienced eye, present anything unusual, but at the end of that time the sleepiness increased to such a degree that it was scarcely possible to rouse him even to take his food, and the child began to exhibit all the distressing symptoms of water on the brain.

His little sister, who at first had seemed to wonder why he did not get up and play with her as usual, used to come to the side of his bed and stroke his head with her hand, telling him to wake up and have his frock on ; but after a few days, finding this a hopeless entreaty, she contented herself with standing opposite and gazing at him, saying, in a sorrowful tone, "He very tired ; he can't get up no more."

Marion, who had free access to the nursery, was deeply affected. Day after day her mother sat on one side of the bed, and Mr. Raeburn on the other. He seldom said anything ; and since the day when he was told the name of the complaint, seemed to have given up hope, sitting always in silent despondency, watching the face of the dying child.

At length, one afternoon there was a perceptible

alteration. The intervals of wakefulness had lately been very short, and a languor was spread over the baby features, which told plainly of the near approach of dissolution.

Mr. Raeburn left the bedside, and unable to endure the thought of his child's dying without being again seen by his mother, went to her apartment to persuade her, if it were possible, to come into the nursery and look at him once more.

She had, ever since her illness, shown the greatest possible reluctance to leaving this room, and when he entered was sitting in her usual position on the sofa.

She took no notice of his approach, but the agonized tones of his voice when he spoke seemed to reach even her beclouded brain ; and looking in his face with something like anxiety, she asked him whether anything was the matter.

"Are you ill?" she inquired, laying her hand upon his arm.

He shook his head.

"What then? are you unhappy?"

The slight quivering of the compressed lip, and the look of anguish which passed across his face answered her question, and she repeated, "What is it? what is the matter?"

Fixing his eyes upon her earnestly, and speaking with laboured distinctness, he answered, "One of my children is very ill; you must come and see him before he dies."

Euphemia sighed deeply, but it was not for her dying boy. She was far from understanding how truly she was to be pitied. She sighed because the effort of leaving her accustomed place and using any kind of exertion was almost more than she could endure ; nevertheless, she suffered him to raise her and lead her, half reluctantly, to the nursery, which she had never entered since the first day of her illness.

The child was lying perfectly still, his pale features retaining much of their infantine beauty. His eyes were open, and he seemed to look about him with more intelligence than he had lately shown. His mother looked at him when she came in, but neither recognised him as her own, nor even as the lovely child whose play she had watched when he had been brought with his little sister into her room.

His father, on whose arm she was leaning, entreated that she would kiss him ; and after a pause of irresolution, she kneeled down and pressed her lips on those of the child.

This short interval of consciousness was not yet over, and as she lifted up her face again and saw his languid eyes looking at her, she said in a tone of tender regret which added another pang to those who watched them, "Pretty child !" Marion wept bitterly, and the little Euphemia gazed upon them all with a mournful face. The mother and child continued to look into each other's eyes ; at

length the latter lifted up his wasted hand, and, touching her cheek, smiled faintly and murmured the word, "Mamma." Euphemia then started up with a strength and energy which astonished them, and for a moment the real circumstances of her lot seemed fully present to her as, pressing her hand to her forehead, she seized her husband's arm and entreated him to pray for her dying boy.

"For he is my child," she exclaimed in a tone of agony and horror, "and they never told me that he would die." But here her hand dropped down again : she murmured, "O that I could but remember ;" and then begged they would tell her what was the matter.

An effort was made to recal her to the scene before her, but it failed, and the dreamy look returning, she gazed forlornly about her, and desired her husband to take her down again.

Thinking his child had not many minutes to live, the father hesitated, and signified his wish that she would put her arm under his head. She accordingly sat down on the side of the bed, the child was lifted up and put into her arms, and in a few minutes he breathed his last upon his mother's bosom.

That was a sorrowful night for the members of the household, and for those who had so fondly watched the child from his earliest infancy—a bitter night for the bereaved father, and perhaps the echo of some sounds of grief, or some slight remembrance of his loss might reach Euphemia's heart, for she

was restless and uneasy ; but for three days after his death she said nothing by which they could gather that she remembered the circumstance, not even when the passing bell was tolled, though the sound of it generally disturbed and irritated her.

On the afternoon of the third day she evinced a desire to leave her usual place, and while her husband was sitting beside her, went up of her own accord into the nursery. The little Effie was lying there, fast asleep in her pretty bed, her dimpled cheek reclining on one hand and her eyelids partially open.

Her mother looked at her, and put her finger into the little hand, which quietly closed upon it. She seemed pleased, but this was evidently not what she was seeking, for after looking at the other little empty bed, she left the nursery, and, her husband following her, went straight to the dressing-room of what had been her own bed-chamber while in health. He did not make any attempt to check her, and she opened the door and entered.

The child was lying in his coffin, which was lined with white satin, and strewed with the buds of white flowers ; a lily of the valley was laid upon his breast, which, though daily renewed, had already begun to droop and fade. His face was perfectly pale, and, though calm and lovely, had a touching expression of sadness spread over it. Two or three soft locks of hair were lying on his marble forehead, and the lace cap and embroidered robe gave him an appearance

still more infantine than he had presented during his short life ; but the baby features being settled in death, the child had never looked so like his father before, and it would seem that Euphemia observed this, for in a low voice she repeated her husband's name, and, taking up the lily, pressed it to her lips and put it in her bosom.

Mr. Raeburn watched her as she sat gazing long and intently at her child, while every now and then a forlorn expression of regret, which seemed a reflection of the dead baby's aspect, stole over her face. At length, with a heavy sigh she arose as if satisfied, and returning to her old place took no further notice of the change, of the closed shutters, or of her mourning dress on the day of the funeral.

As for his father, when he had laid him in the grave, and seen everything that had belonged to him returned to the dressing-room, his toys, his clothes, and even his little bed, he never willingly mentioned his name again or alluded to his loss, but seemed to concentrate all his affection on his little daughter and Marion, who was his cherished companion and her playfellow.

Since his wife's illness he had almost entirely withdrawn himself from society, and, but for Mrs. Greyson's unfailing friendship, must have been entirely alone in the world. His love for her children and for his little Euphemia, together with the pleasure he took in his pastoral duties, seemed all he was capable of enjoying, and for the sake of com-

panionship he often allowed his little child to spend whole hours playing about in his study, strewing the chairs and footstool with her dolls and their various gay bonnets and gowns, till, tired with her many journeys across the room, she would hide her face in his bosom and fall asleep in his arms while he was writing.

Two years passed on. Marion and Wilfred grew tall and strong, and both manifested considerable ability. They inherited from their father a great love of music, and would spend many an hour playing on the church organ. They were about thirty miles from a cathedral town, but as there was a railway across the country, their mother procured for them a regular instructor from thence both in singing and instrumental music.

Marion was now thirteen years of age, and gave promise of everything that her mother could desire. Her face retained its infantine tenderness and serenity, and being rather small for her years she generally passed for younger than she was ; while her endearing manner and confiding nature caused her to be treated like a child by Mr. Raeburn, who regarded her with scarcely less tenderness than he bestowed upon his little daughter.

Marion and Wilfred had never been brought forward in their childhood, nor taught to assume any other manner than that which naturally belonged to them. They had both been rather encouraged than otherwise in their child's play, and could amuse

themselves after their own fashion without the least fear of being laughed at. Solomon, the wisest of men, when he said, "There is a time for all things," doubtless made no exception excluding the time to be a child, to think as a child, and to be delighted with childish things. It is entirely a modern invention to make men and women of creatures not twelve years old, to give their games a philosophical turn, and make their very story-books science in disguise.

Marion and Wilfred had never been cheated into learning in this clandestine way; but, like the boy in "Evenings at Home," when they worked they worked, and when they played they played.

Their moral feelings had been carefully cultivated from their infancy, and all that one human being can do for another, in the way of religious instruction, had been imparted to them both by their mother and Mr. Raeburn. But they had never been encouraged to display their knowledge, or take any part in religious conversation; and like most children who really feel the importance of serious religion, they evinced a sensitive shrinking from anything like an explanation of their feelings.

There was one amusement reserved for Marion which was not childish; it was to teach the little Euphemia to read. This was at first thought a great honour and privilege, both by mistress and pupil,—the former, because it gave her the opportunity to exercise a little patronage; the latter,

because she looked upon the lessons as a new kind of play. But in a very short time the little creature found out that this play was different to all others, inasmuch as she was obliged to play at it whether she would or no. She therefore began to rebel, and Mrs. Greyson was obliged to interpose her authority to prevent her from making Jack's house of the letters, or creeping under the table to nurse a sofa cushion by way of doll. Neither teacher nor pupil looked upon these daily lessons with much enthusiasm after the first novelty had gone off; but with a little superintendence, they proved of essential benefit to both; for the pupil was a warmly affectionate child, and having a passionate temper, was more easily controlled by love than by severity. On the other hand, her quickness and cleverness kept the faculties of her always gentle teacher in a state of salutary activity.

CHAPTER IV.

A JOURNEY IN A FOG.

ANOTHER year passed ; a quiet, happy, uneventful year. Since his wife's illness, Mr. Raeburn had never left home, but now he consented to the entreaties of his only sister to come and spend the autumn with her and her family in the Highlands.

Change of air and scene were of so much benefit to his spirits that he was easily induced to prolong his stay, and take a yachting excursion down the west coast. He had constant letters from Marion and Mrs. Greyson, giving good accounts of his wife and child up to the period of his commencing his excursion ; yet he did not approach his home without a restless feeling of agitation. He had so long been accustomed to watch over his wife, and delight in his child, that he could not return without a half wonder lest either he or they might be changed by the absence ; lest he might feel less able to bear with his poor impassive wife now, that for some weeks he had been emancipated from her, or lest his child might have learned to do without him.

He travelled alone inside the coach towards home. The day had been fine and bright, but towards evening a heavy fog came on, which gradually became so thick that the coachman was compelled to slacken his pace, so completely were hedges, fences, and open common enveloped in thick white mist, which seemed, as it grew more dense, to press up to the very windows.

Night came on : there was a full moon, but it only gave light enough to show the density of the fog. As they approached the cross roads, where he expected some vehicle to meet him and take him on, he almost feared the coach would pass it. He let down a window when they stopped to change horses, and the fog poured in like smoke ; it seemed to stop his breath as he put his head out to inquire whether they could not put up better lamps, to show their whereabouts to any travellers who might meet them on the road.

"Is that Mr. Raeburn?" he heard the landlady ask, as she stood with two candles in her hand, giving directions about a post-chaise which had gone on before them, "for the fog," she observed, "deadened sound as well as sight."

He was about to speak to the woman when he heard her mention his name, and retreat towards the house with an exclamation of pity, which struck upon his ear with a strange sensation of surprise and annoyance.

He had never asked for sympathy ; the condition

of his wife was never alluded to by him unless it was absolutely necessary ; and he had so full and true a belief that all the events of his life had been appointed in love, and for his good, that he had taken all possible pains to be not only resigned, but cheerful. His feelings were so well understood by his friends, that he very seldom heard them allude to his lot in tones of pity, and the words of this woman, which evidently were not intended for his ears, cast a damp upon his spirits which he could not throw off—"Is that Mr. Raeburn? Ah, poor gentleman!"

It was midnight when they reached the cross-roads ; he saw two dim lamps gleaming at the road side.

"Is that my carriage?" he exclaimed, springing out. "Is Porson there?—tell him to look after the luggage."

It was quite a relief to speak ; and by the sound of his own voice break in upon the constant mental repetition of those words,—“Is that Mr. Raeburn? Ah, poor gentleman!”

He advanced hastily to the carriage-door, and was surprised to see the schoolmaster standing beside it.

"You are very late, Sir," said the man, with peculiar gravity.

"Is all well?" asked the Rector, startled by his manner.

"In the village, did you mean, Sir?" asked the man slowly, and as if reluctantly.

"No, at home?" He waited for an answer.

The face of the schoolmaster was not very distinctly visible. It was some time before he spoke. At length he said,—“Did you wish to know *now*, Sir?”

“No,” replied Mr. Raeburn, springing into the carriage; “drive on. Tell them to be quick. Don’t speak again,—I cannot bear it.”

The man got in also, and sat down opposite to him. The coach had gone on. There was some little delay in getting the luggage on to the roof of the carriage.

Mr. Raeburn had covered his face with his hands. Delays are dreadful to the wretched. With the impatience of agitation and suspense, he looked up, and said, vehemently, “Why don’t you tell them to make haste? I want to get home quickly.”

The man answered, in a tone so desponding that it sounded like the echo of his own fears,—“It is of no use!”

The next instant the carriage started at as rapid a rate as even he could have desired. The journey was made in silence. He went through the thick fog with his arms folded and his eyes fixed upon the shrouded landscape. But he failed to recognise any of its features, and did not even know when he entered his own gates. It was not till they stopped suddenly at the door that he was aware of his arrival at home.

The hall-door was open, a lamp was burning,

and several servants were standing within. He saw a lady pass rapidly down the stairs. She met him on the steps; but her face was so utterly devoid of colour, so much changed, that for the moment he did not know her. Presently he remembered that it was Mrs. Greyson. She did not speak at first, and he advanced into the hall and demanded to see his wife.

The servants looked at one another; and Mrs. Greyson said, "Your wife is in her usual state;—she is asleep."

With a strong effort he went on into the study, and laid his hat on the table. It seemed impossible for him to ask the next question, and as he stood, amazed and pale, Mrs. Greyson sunk into a chair, and Marion, frightened and trembling, stole into the room and sheltered herself beside her.

Her presence seemed to recal him to himself. He turned to her mother with startling energy and sternness, and said, "Where is my child? I want her,—I must see her. Why don't you bring her to see her father?"

Mrs. Greyson looked in his face. It became paler and paler. She knew it was needless to prepare his mind when he already foreboded the worst. He repeated faintly, "Why don't you bring her to see her father?"

She answered slowly, "Your child has another Father. He has sent for her, and she is gone."

He had sunk upon the sofa as he asked his ques-

tion for the second time; and when the sound of her voice reached his ears, he shuddered, and shrunk back, as if to escape from the intolerable pain it gave him. But he uttered no word of grief or horror, and never changed his position excepting to fold his arms tighter across his breast, and set his lips, which grew more and more white.

Mrs. Greyson sat motionless, gazing at his countenance with unutterable pity. But she offered no word of consolation, and for a long, miserable hour, she and Marion retained silence, till the sound of footsteps overhead startled him from his enforced calmness. He looked up, and seeing the tears stealing down Marion's pale cheeks, passionately entreated her mother to send her away, and fainted while he was endeavouring to explain his wish to see his beloved child.

How shall we expect others to sympathize with us when we know not how to sympathize with ourselves? Why, indeed, should we expect our friends fully to understand our sorrows, and make allowance for our bending under them, when the very soul which but yesterday, it may be, was stricken down to the dust, to-day is able to cry for help, to-morrow may be able to help itself, and the next day may wonder that it was so utterly cast down?

If we cannot sympathize, neither can we understand ourselves. When the paroxysm of pain or the storm of grief is over, we forget how great an influence it exerted for the time, and with the

undisturbed, calm reason of health and composure, we look back upon our conduct and are hard upon ourselves;—we condemn our own folly, and forget that the faculties which sit in judgment now were then more than half dethroned.

Every parent can feel for a man when he loses a beloved child, especially if that child was his only one,—still more if it was the solace of a life otherwise lonely and marked by misfortune.

Every one felt for the Rector when he committed his only child to the grave. Many tears were shed for him when he first appeared afterwards in the church and at the cottages. But after a while it became an ordinary thing to see him wandering through the lanes alone; the people became accustomed to his smile, which played so brightly about his mouth, but could not reach to dissipate the gloom of his eyes, and vanished so suddenly with the short sigh of a person whose heart is heavy. People shook their heads when first they observed how much the dark-eyed children were always his favourites; but after a while, they only said it was very natural, and even the carpenter's wife soon began to think nothing of it when she saw him turn round, half unconsciously to himself, and watch her sturdy little twins as they walked hand in hand along the road.

Mr. Raeburn never once alluded to his loss after the first few weeks, and would not bear to hear it

spoken of in his presence. He was, after a time, so perfectly calm and self-possessed, that the care buried in his own breast could scarcely have been detected by others ; and but for his sensitive shrinking from certain topics, from the mention of some few names, and of the year of good promise which had succeeded his marriage, he might have been supposed to have got over his loss altogether, and to have "ceased to send sighs after a day that was past." But the few who knew him well were conscious that such was not the case, and of those few none knew it better than little Marion.

As has been often before mentioned, the nursery at the rectory was a long room in the slope of the roof, with casement windows, partly shrouded by ivy. These windows were the only part of Mr. Raeburn's house which were visible beyond the trees of its garden, an opening between them causing their diamond panes and bushy ivy to be distinctly seen from Marion's chamber.

As a child she had often laid awake watching these casements, lighted from within ; and, with her curtains drawn back, could discern a person who might pass between them and the light, though the distance was too great for her to distinguish much more.

It had been a habit with her to watch this room before she went to sleep ; and the dusky roof and dark outlines of the rectory, with the stars rising

behind them, were among the most familiar objects that presented themselves in her dreams. After the death of the little Euphemia, it was some time before Marion took courage to draw back her curtains and look out at the blank, desolate nursery; but the force of habit prevailing, she one night did so unconsciously. The moon was shining full upon the windows, and their cold, blank appearance made her hide her face in the pillow and weep, till she started up, half-asleep, at sight of some one bringing a light in the nursery, setting it down near the central window, and then beginning slowly to pass up and down.

Marion looked a long while, and fell asleep before the light was withdrawn.

Every night, as she had watched the place where her little playmates were, she now watched the return of their bereaved father, and saw the long falling of the shadow on the wall; but she never told any one of these visits, though they were not without effect on her mind.

She was now old enough to know that she herself was the greatest solace left to her so-called uncle, and she returned his tenderness with a settled intention of drawing him from his trouble, and humouring him in a disposition which he sometimes showed, of trying to make her a substitute for his little daughter, and cheating himself into the fancy that she was his own child.

So the time passed, with little variation, till Marion was sixteen. There was no sudden change in her, though now she looked nearly a woman.

Her affections had dawned early, and as she approached the borders of womanhood her face retained, in a great degree, the tender expression which had marked it in childhood; and though she was tall for her years, her figure was exceedingly youthful, and her manner, without affectation, was made up of an interesting compound of the woman and the child.

About this time Dora and Elizabeth, Marion's two cousins, came to spend a week with her; their father was about to take them a tour in Wales, and, as Swanstead was in their way, he sent them forward with an old servant, to stay there with his sister and her children till he was able to join them.

The cousins had not met for two years, and were all very much altered. Dora and Elizabeth were very unlike each other in person, manners, voice, and even in dress,—that minor circumstance which often gives an apparent likeness to sisters. Dora was rather tall, and had a very graceful figure; she was pale, had dark hair, dark grey eyes, and a grave expression.

Elizabeth, on the contrary, had brown eyes, a very high colour, a quantity of curling brown hair, and something remarkably lively in her manner and elastic in her movements. Dora was so very



retiring and silent in society, that Elizabeth, without any intention on her own part, had been gradually drawn on to take the lead; and as she was very much at her ease in all situations she generally passed for a clever and interesting young woman, though her talents were decidedly inferior to her sister's.

Two years, at their time of life, was a long time to have been separated, and their fancy that they knew each other intimately because they now corresponded freely, melted away after the first half-hour's conversation. Marion could not help feeling, in spite of their familiar, sister-like greeting, that they were two strange young ladies. She could scarcely believe that Elizabeth was only two years older than herself; and if they had not begun to talk about their aunt would have been abashed by their earnest gazing at her.

"Does my aunt lie on the sofa every evening?" asked Dora, while Marion was taking them up stairs.

"O yes, always. Mamma has done so almost ever since I can remember."

"How much older you look, Marion," said Elizabeth. "I declare you are taller than I am."

"Yes," said Dora, thoughtfully; and then added, "My aunt looks much older, too."

"I hope you don't think mamma looking ill?" asked Marion.

"O no," exclaimed Elizabeth, laughing. "Dora,

how grave you are; you frighten this little thing, —look how she colours. You don't think my aunt looking ill?"

"No," said Dora, turning from the glass and drawing her bonnet-strings through her fingers, "but she certainly looks much older."

"Well," said Elizabeth, giving her sister a gentle push, "and of course she is older, you silly thing! You know my aunt was not young when she married. You are getting fearfully old yourself. Marion, did you know that Dora was out of her teens?"

Marion had not time to answer when Elizabeth, who had sauntered to a window, exclaimed, "Here is Mr. Raeburn coming up the drive, and Mr. Maidley with him. How I disliked Mr. Maidley when I was a child; he used to tease me so. Marion, how is that clever son of his?"

"Frank? Oh, he is very well."

"Is his hair as red as ever?"

"Quite; and he never sees me without asking after you, Elizabeth."

"The dear youth! The time before last that I came here, we were devoted to each other. I remember I thought myself quite a young lady, and was offended because I had to come down one morning and see Mr. Maidley in my morning pink gingham frock with short sleeves. Frank was with him, and gave me some delicious toffy. I remember the taste of it to this day."

"They will stay to tea," said Marion, "and I must go down and make it, dear Elizabeth. Mamma will be tired if she is left alone to talk to them."

"Oh, we are quite ready, my dear; let us all come down together. Then my aunt is easily tired, is she Marion?"

"Yes," said Marion, disturbed to perceive that they both observed a change in her mother which had escaped her own observation; but, during tea, she could not help thinking her cousins had alarmed her needlessly. Her mother was in high spirits, and seemed quite amused with Elizabeth's lively conversation. Their guests, also, were inclined to be more than usually talkative, and had a great many questions to ask.

Elizabeth's letters had lately been very full of the praises of a certain Mr. Dreux—quite a young man,—who had lately come to the town. His personal appearance she had described with minute accuracy; and in the same page with the laudits upon his delightful dark eyes, and his fine voice, was a great deal about High Church and Low Church, and several other things, which Marion did not know very much about.

Marion was very curious to hear something more about this said Mr. Dreux. She was therefore pleased when his name was mentioned to hear Elizabeth launch out in his praise, though she observed that Mr. Raeburn listened without much

enthusiasm. That might be, she thought, because he did not like to hear young ladies talk in that high-flown style of panegyric about a clergyman. But Elizabeth continued to descant on Mr. Dreux's various excellencies for some time with great animation, till, happening to observe that she was sure he merited a higher sphere, and she hoped he would not long be a curate, the grave manner of Mr. Raeburn's bow, in reply, caused it to flash across her mind that Mr. Dreux had an uncle in that very neighbourhood, who, it was said, had promised him the next presentation to a certain living. "Now, if it should happen to be this living," thought Elizabeth, "what an awkward mistake I have made!"


She was rather confirmed in the idea that this might be the case, by observing that Mr. Maidley immediately began to talk to her about her native place, and about her friends and occupations, with great apparent interest.

"'Religion walks in her silver slippers' at Westport," he observed, in answer to one of her remarks.

Elizabeth smilingly assented.

"In fact," she said, "the clergy are all in all there; their opinions are consulted even on indifferent subjects with the utmost deference."

"It was so when I served my first curacy there," remarked Mr. Raeburn, composedly sipping his coffee. "Westport is a very priest-ridden place."



"Very what?" asked Mr. Maidley, laughing.

Elizabeth thought the assertion so extraordinary that she did not attempt to conceal her amazement; and as Mr. Raeburn chose to appear quite unconscious that he had said anything remarkable, and she could not make up her mind whether he was in joke or earnest, she glanced at her aunt with an expression of annoyance.

"I think my niece would like some explanation," said Mrs. Greyson, smiling. "I am sure she has never heard the term priest-ridden applied to Westport before."

"No, indeed," said Elizabeth, laughing, but with the slightest possible shrug of contempt.

Mr. Raeburn did not seem disposed to comply with the request.

"Tiresome man!" thought Elizabeth; "he was always prosy; but I never heard him talk in this ridiculous way before."

"Will you favour us with a definition of the word, Miss Paton, as you take so much exception to it?" asked Mr. Maidley.

"Oh, I know perfectly well what it means, of course, Mr. Maidley," said Elizabeth; "but I always thought it applied exclusively to Roman Catholic countries, particularly to Ireland."

"If it simply means, governed by priests, I think you ought in conscience to forgive Mr. Raeburn; but perhaps you objected to the expression because it is generally used to denote not simply govern-

ment by priests, but bad government by priests,—not because it is a reproach to any people to be under subjection to a priesthood.”

Elizabeth again replied that she did not like the expression, because she had heard it applied to the Irish, and it implied pity for them. “Now, the idea,” she added, “of our being pitied at Westport! We who have such active and excellent clergymen, whose churches are all crowded. I have often heard strangers say that Westport was quite a model place. The people are so remarkably moral, and evangelical religion has made such great advances.”

“And who are at the head of it all?”

“Oh, the clergy, of course,” replied Elizabeth.

“Then you do not at all wish to qualify your assertion, that they are the governing spirits of the place?”

“No,” said Elizabeth, anticipating what he might have said further; “but who so fit to preside—who would lead better? I think,” she added, quite forgetting that she was taking the wrong side of the argument,—“I think it is a very good thing, and we ought to be extremely thankful that we have such excellent men to guide us, and tell us what we ought to do, and to save us the constant trouble of thinking for ourselves; besides, we are expressly told to ‘obey those who are set over us.’”

“Certainly,” said Mr. Raeburn, taking up the

conversation ; "but you are also commanded to 'try the spirits,' which, I presume, means something entirely opposed to unhesitatingly adopting any line of conduct or principle pointed out, just to save the trouble of thinking for yourselves."

Elizabeth blushed, and felt annoyed—not because her faith in the strength of her own position was shaken, but because she felt that her admission of want of thought must have weakened it in the eyes of her opponents. "I cannot see," she said, addressing Mr. Maidley, "how it can be otherwise than good to be swayed as we are by the clergy, provided they always sway us in the right direction. They must preside, for instance, at all the religious meetings."

"To be sure," said the Rector, looking pointedly at Mr. Maidley. "What's the use of asking a layman to speak?"

"I cannot speak fit to be heard," said Mr. Maidley, evidently parrying a personal thrust. "I should make the best cause ridiculous by my way of advocating it."

Mr. Raeburn laughed, but almost instantly sighed heavily, and beckoned to Marion to come and sit beside him on the sofa ; presently, after saying, in a half bantering tone, to Elizabeth, "I am afraid you are in a terrible state of bondage, Miss Paton, like the other good people at Westport."

"So he really means it," thought Elizabeth. "What a queer old gentleman he is !"

"So we are a priest-ridden set!" she said, half laughing, to Mr. Maidley.


"Remember that the expression was not mine, Miss Paton," was the reply. "I by no means adopt it as the expression of my mind. I, for my part, should be sorry to convey the slightest reflection upon the clergy of Westport; for the defects of that place (and I certainly think it has great defects,) I entirely blame the people, principally the young people, and among the young I think the greatest offenders are the young ladies."

"There, Elizabeth!" said her aunt; "now I think you have an undoubted right to demand an explanation: this is bringing the matter very near home."

"Really, I cannot in the least understand what we have done; I do not feel at all guilty. First, you seem to say that we are governed by our clergy; secondly, that it ought not to be so; and yet, thirdly, that it is not their fault if they do govern us, but everything amiss is the fault of the young ladies."

"No, I must alter your propositions a little. First, it was *you* who said you were governed by your clergy. It was, secondly, Mr. Raeburn who said that ought not to be; and it was I who intimated that I blamed the conduct of the young ladies."

"Well, I think everything is right and delightful at Westport. So when you have told me what you find amiss, Mr. Maidley, I do not promise to be penitent."



"Remember that I am far from imputing it to the clergy as a fault that they take the trouble to rule. In this instance, as they happen to rule well, there is little to regret."

"As they *happen* to rule well?"

"Certainly; for when people have been in the habit of implicitly receiving as truth what has been set before them, thus, however unconsciously, giving the attribute of infallibility to their spiritual guides; where they have been accustomed to allow themselves to be led blindfold, even in the *right* way, they must, by this voluntary humility, this disuse of their own reason, have so much weakened it, that if a time comes for judging and discerning,—if the man who had led them one way is taken from them, and another stands up in his place who wants to lead them in the opposite direction,—the habit of dependance and reliance on another mind may very likely have become so strong, that, as they gave up the helm to the one to guide them right, they will leave it with the other to guide them wrong."


"Yes, perhaps so; but that applies both ways, Mr. Maidley."

"So it does, it is of universal application; but I do not think it is therefore the less to be deplored. If it is the fashion in any place to make a profession of serious religion, crowds will profess; and whichever party is the fashion will have plenty of so-called adherents so long as it remains in undisputed possession of the field. But let another party come up,

—no matter whether a good or bad one,—opinions change like a tide, and long-cherished sentiments melt away like frost-work; and this must be the case where people follow, not a system of doctrine, but a favourite preacher. Instead of holding to the one eternal standard, they go to Mr. So-and-so's church, and there, they think, 'whatever is, is right.'"

"And do you seriously think that people who have been accustomed to truth will not at once detect error and reject it?"

"Those would, undoubtedly," said Mr. Raeburn, "who had loved truth for its own sake, knowing it to be such, having a reasonable conviction of its power, and a personal certainty of its goodness. But in a large congregation, principally composed of the young, where the minister himself is young, popular, and amiable, and well calculated to attract regard, I should expect to find great numbers who hear with so little discrimination, so little exercise of their minds, that if he were some day to get up and advance something quite different to his usual teaching, they would scarcely remark or attend to it. And if we add to these (the perfectly thoughtless), that mass of people who hear the man, not for the sake of his message, but for his own sake,—those particularly among the poor to whom he may have become personally endeared for kindness done to them in times of sickness and distress, and who adopt and detail his opinions, even the most unim-



portant, simply because they are *his*; and those among the young, who actually excite one another to believe that they are deeply attached to the ministry of this man or that man, making their very profession appear ridiculous by their forgetfulness how much personal regard and admiration may have to do with their religious raptures,—if we add all these together, how few will be left whose intelligence on religious matters is sufficiently alive to enable them to discern error, if it should be taught by any whom they have hitherto looked up to. Only imagine what would be the state of the church where your favourite Mr. Dreux officiates, if anything so lamentable should occur as his taking up erroneous doctrine. It is difficult for a popular man to prevent his people from setting him up as a standard; they think less of his opinions than of himself. How many people would change, do you think, if Mr. Dreux should change?"

"Oh, I don't know, Mr. Raeburn; perhaps half of them."

"And yet you would not blame the clergy so much, where this is the case, as the people," said Dora.

"No, because the best teaching is nearly useless (humanly speaking) where there is a want of intelligence in the learners; people would be ashamed to remain in as much ignorance of politics, literature, or even science, as they do contentedly

of religion—I do not mean of the practical part of religion, of devotional feelings, or moral maxims, I mean of what may be called the *theory* of religion—those *principles* without which no practice of outward duty can avail. There are thousands of well-educated people in this country who could not give a correct, distinct account of the difference between the English Church and the Church of Rome; and there are thousands more who know nothing, or at least could give no intelligent account of the great parties which exist within the Church of England, and which are divided as by vast gulfs from one another.”

“I suppose you mean the High Church and the Evangelical, and the old Moral school; but as all these are called Church people, it seems natural to conclude that they are nearly alike.”

“To be sure it seems natural, as you say; but don't you think the Church people in this country ought to know enough of the doctrines they profess to uphold, to be able to say whether their ministers are faithful or not. The Church, as an institution, is for the people; the clergy minister to and for the people, not for themselves. If they cannot discriminate in what good teaching consists, they are scarcely the better for it. The misfortune is, that they often consider it an act of presumption to judge of it, instead of an act of duty.”

“But if people are to be encouraged to judge,”

said Elizabeth, "surely it will encourage a censorious spirit—surely it will make them presumptuous."

"My dear, you are differing from me *now* on a subject of some importance."

"Ah, but it is only in conversation; you know all clergymen do not think with you, Mr. Raeburn."

"To be sure not; so now I have brought you to a point where you must presume to judge for yourself."

Elizabeth laughed, and said, "Ah, but it has not the consequence which need make me fear so much to judge for myself."

"Now there we differ again, for I say it is a matter of great consequence."

"Go on, Elizabeth," said her aunt, "you see you are encouraged to have an opinion of your own."

"I must say," proceeded Elizabeth, "that I think in some congregations they are very fond of judging, and are always criticising some clergyman or other."

"There we come to a point of agreement. I have known several cases where a censorious spirit has been manifested, but I almost always found that it exercised itself about trifles. 'This man's voice was harsh; that man's manner was offensive; this sermon was too long, and that was badly delivered;' but if the true spirit of discrimination was abroad, if people considered it in all cases their duty to know whether they heard what was true, and

to know why—then, I think, the censorious spirit about trifles would nearly disappear ; it is only a man incapable of appreciating a fine picture who draws your attention to a spot of dust on the frame. Those whose attention is absorbed by the important matter of a sermon, are the least likely to quarrel with its manner. You must not try to put off your own responsibility, you know. You cannot really shift it to any one else's shoulders."

"Then," said Elizabeth, half laughing, "it is still not our fault ; we ought to be taught a little more self-dependance : and perhaps it would save our clergymen a good deal of anxiety in the end, and trouble too."

"The trouble, for instance, of leading you all your lives in leading-strings. Well, but if instead of so much religious enthusiasm and excitement, there was a more steady, serious, and reasonable value for the great truths of Christianity, I do not think the clergy would find themselves deprived of any of the respect which is due to their office ; on the contrary, I should expect to find those who hitherto, from want of talent or from natural manner, had never been acceptable, though faithful and devoted, would meet with regard for their works' sake ; and those now popular would still possess the love of their people, but it would be given from a better motive "

"Well, Elizabeth," said her aunt, "you and Dora are both come to years of discretion ; do you mean

to take any part of this censure to yourselves—does it apply to you ?”

“ Yes,” said Elizabeth, in a doubtful tone, “ it does in some degree ; but that does not make us the chief offenders ; I know of nothing particular that we have done.”

“ What ! nothing particular !” exclaimed Mr. Maidley ; “ do you call adulation nothing particular ? Is there nothing dangerous to a young man in the flattery and admiration of your sex ?”

“ Oh,” said Elizabeth, “ I cannot think *that* would have any effect ; I am sure Mr. Lodge and Mr. Dreux, and a good many others whom I could name, are quite above any such influence. The idea of such excellent men feeling flattered and pleased by the attentions of a few girls seems to me quite derogatory.”

“ I don’t mean to say,” returned her antagonist, “ that I think any man of sense can be pleased at the *way* in which these feelings sometimes show themselves. I know a man who told me he had had six and thirty pairs of slippers given him, some of them lined with white satin. I heard of another, who had thirteen pocket-handkerchiefs given him, worked in the corner with hair.”

“ Oh, Mr. Maidley,” said Mrs. Greyson, “ are you quite sure that anecdote is authentic ; it sounds very like a malicious invention.”

“ Quite true, I assure you, and the same man had

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"We'll hear his defence to-morrow. Maidley, we are late already."

"What a provoking man Mr. Raeburn is," said

Elizabeth, turning to watch the two gentlemen as they walked briskly down the drive. "The idea of his calling Mr. Dreux a handsome and devoted young bachelor ! A paragon, indeed ! I am certain he meant to infer that I at least thought him one. However," she added, laughing, and recovering her good humour, "he need not be afraid lest people should make an idol of *him* !"

"I am not so sure of that. The people here are more than commonly attached to him."

"Ah, just the poor, because he is so good to them, takes notice of their children, and talks to them all familiarly by name."

"Well, perhaps it was jealousy then that made him speak in such a slighting manner of popularity," said her aunt in an ironical tone. "Do you think that will account for it, my dear ?"

"No ; but really, aunt," said Elizabeth, laughing, "it was very provoking. I am sure he was laughing at me ; I saw his eyes twinkle, though his face was so grave."

CHAPTER V.


THE COWSLIP PICKING.

THE next day was hot and rainy ; the three girls had their work carried to a thatched arbour in the garden, and followed themselves, with umbrellas.

There they could talk at their ease ; and very much they amused Marion, and surprised her not a little ; they had a piquant way of relating things, and detailed a great deal of religious gossip for her edification ; for everything they said was, as it were, tinctured with religion, and yet in a way which conveyed more the idea that they lived in a religious atmosphere, than that their own minds were deeply imbued with its solemnities.

Mr. Dreux was described over again with minute accuracy, and old Mr. King, his Rector, who was also a very good man, it appeared, only he had a wooden leg—a cork one at least—which had a joint at the knee, and this joint creaked sometimes, and made foolish people laugh.

Marion was very much amused with her two cousins, but began to perceive that she had not



much in common with them, and liked their conversation best when they talked least about religion. This was wrong, she supposed, and she tried to overcome it, but without much success, and as, in spite of these differences between them, the three cousins were very much attracted towards each other, they easily found conversation which was equally pleasant to all.

The next morning was more than commonly fine, and they rose early to walk in the garden before breakfast.

"Well, Marion," said Mrs. Greyson, when she came down, "have you thought of any plan for amusing your cousins to-day?"

"We can have a drive in the evening, mamma; but for this morning Dora and Elizabeth have thought of something for themselves."

"What is it, my dears?"

"Marion told us yesterday that the maids from the rectory and two of your servants were going to join at a grand cowslip picking for cowslip wine; we thought we should enjoy of all things to go and help, for it is not very hot."

"And we could choose the meadows along the side of the wood," said Marion, "where there is a long line of shade, and afterwards sit in the open air under that great clump of lime trees, and pick out the blossoms."

"That will be a very good plan of spending the

morning, and if you like, you shall have your dinner brought out."

Directly after breakfast the maids sent in word that they were ready, and Dora and Elizabeth went into the hall to look at them. Each had got a large bag fastened in front of her apron to hold the blossoms, and the gardener was going to carry a clothes-basket into the meadow for the "pips," as the flowers are called by the cowslip gatherers.

The young women looked very happy in the prospect of their annual day's pleasure; each one had brought a basket of provisions on her arm. The young ladies also looked all the more blooming for their delight, as they tied on the largest bonnets the house afforded and set off, under Marion's escort, about half an hour after the maids.

"What an enchanting day!" they exclaimed, as they emerged from the garden and entered a broad meadow covered with cowslips, orchises, and the beautiful meadow-sweet. "We shall soon fill our baskets here."

But Marion said it would not do to stay there, the sun was too hot; they must go through this meadow and several others, till they reached the skirts of Swanstead-wood.

It mattered very little to Dora and Elizabeth where they went, or what they did, so long as they were under the open sky in the meadows. They wandered along with a sense of freedom and delight

which increased as the morning advanced, and amused themselves with observing how the rich landscape changed with their change of position.

At length they reached the meadow by the wood, and found that the maids had already gathered quite a rick of cowslips, which were ostentatiously heaped up, and made a great show in the shade.

Marion and her cousins now set to work to gather a rival heap ; but there were so many things to be seen, so many trees to be admired, and so many little points of view which each must call the other to see, that their rick made a very poor figure beside that of their more industrious contemporaries, who kept at first a sufficient distance to enable each party to talk without being overheard by the other.

"How happy they look !" said Marion, turning to look at the maids, who were evidently enjoying the change from their ordinary occupations.

"Yes, and how happy everything looks, Marion. We must go down to the river's brink ; there must be such a delightful air there, and we can keep in the shade nearly all the way."

The river wound along one end of this meadow, and went through the thickest part of the wood. It was brimful of water, and as smooth as glass.

They stood for some minutes beside it, listening to the lapse of the water, and looking down the long arch of trees which met over it in the wood,

where it became a perfectly green river in the clearest shade imaginable.

"If there was but a boat," said Elizabeth, "how delightful it would be to sit on the water under that arch of trees, and there pick out the cowslip blossoms!"

"There is a boat somewhere in the wood," said Marion, "and if the path is not very much overgrown I can find it. But we must let the maids know where we are going, that they may tell mamma how to find us when she comes."

The maids entered with great cordiality into this scheme of the young ladies; and as the latter had not gathered more than a peck of cowslips altogether, these generous rivals proposed to carry a quantity of their own booty into the boat for them.

The wood was alive with birds; and when they had made their way to the water's edge, they had some difficulty in finding the low, flat-roofed boat-house, so completely were the banks overgrown with six-feet-high bulrushes.

At last the dairy-maid discovered it, and then the next difficulty was to float the boat out, and get it clear of the rushes. This the same young woman effected, previously emptying her apron-full of cowslip-blossoms into it, and receiving the contributions of her companions. The boat was moored to the shed by a rope, and now the dairy-maid had to be pulled back that she might land. This the inmates of the boat easily effected; and the rope

being only about five yards long, was no sooner fastened, than the slight onward movement of the water turned the boat's head gently down the stream, and they commenced their pleasant task, completely over-canopied by the green ash and maple trees on each side of the river.

"This really is felicity!" said Elizabeth, as she looked up among the thick branches, and saw the sunbeams shooting aslant in the tree-tops of their roof.

Marion took off her bonnet, and the delightful air moved her luxuriant hair.

"Look down into the water, Dora," she said; "see how full it is of tiny little fishes. I am glad we thought of coming here. It must be very hot by this time in the open meadows. See, Elizabeth, here is a nest!"

Marion said this with the composure of a person who can see a nest any day; but Dora and Elizabeth were wild with delight.

"Oh! don't stand up in such a hurry!" cried Marion. "See how you have made the boat rock!"

There was a branch of maple hanging down over Marion's head, quite into the boat, with a white-throat's nest depending from it. It was formed without of hay and grass, and lined with horsehair and a few tufts of wool. When she had gathered some of the leaves it was distinctly visible.

"Look at the beautiful eggs!—pink, with brown

veins. If we sit perfectly still, I dare say the mother will come back. Whitethroats are very bold birds."

They did accordingly sit perfectly still for some time, and picked a basket full of "pips;" but after a while they forgot themselves, and began to talk and laugh without any reference to the supposed terrors of the bird.

"The poor little creature!—how frightened she must have been," said Elizabeth, in a tone of regret, when she remembered her broken resolution. "I am afraid her eggs must be quite cold by this time."

Marion laughed. "Look up, Elizabeth," she said, "and do not make any exclamation."


Elizabeth looked up. "I see two black eyes peeping out at me," she said. "Oh! the beautiful little creature! But how keenly she watches us, and how fast she turns her head from side to side."

"Take no further notice of her," said Marion, "and she will sit on. I wish mamma would come. What a long time she is!"

"Can my aunt walk so far from home?"

"Oh, no!" and again Marion felt troubled. "But she will have the pony. There is a bridle-path through the meadows; she will only walk through the wood."

The morning wore on more quickly than they were aware. It was enlivened by the light species



of work in which they were engaged, and diversified by such slight incidents as the playing of a larger fish than ordinary about their boat, the sudden splash of the water when a pike made a spring after the flies, or the leisurely floating towards them of a whole family of sleepy-looking water-hens, and their precipitate rush into the reeds when they beheld the human faces.

As the sun got high the reflection of the trees in the water became greener and more distinct, and the round spots of sunshine more yellow and bright.

Many country sounds floated down the river and made the solitude quite musical. There were the thousand voices of the rookery, so distant that any little wren who chose to perch near could drown them with his merry chirrup. There were the thrushes singing, and the jays chattering in the wood, the water-rats splashing, and every quarter of an hour there was the striking of Swanstead clock.

"It struck a quarter to one just now," said Elizabeth, beginning to fan herself with her straw-hat; "if we are industrious we shall finish these flowers in a quarter of an hour."

"Of course we shall dine here," said Dora; "there would be room for six or eight people in such a boat as this."

It may be observed of the said boat, that it had neither seats nor oars, so that the inhabitants could

recline in its flat bottom with great elegance, as in a canoe.

At the moment the clock struck two the party became aware of a little creaking sound in the wood, as of some one treading down dead twigs. The sound approached, and presently Mr. Raeburn appeared, making his way among the trees and talking to himself as he wandered, with his hands in his pockets, towards the boat. He was in a fit of abstraction, and evidently had not come into the wood to look for them.

The girls looked at each other and smiled, as they just caught a word here and there of his soliloquy. He was just passing, when a clear merry laugh caught his attention and caused him to turn hastily.

"Well!" exclaimed the Rector, in a tone of perplexity, "I could have declared I heard some one laugh."

The girls made signs to each other to be quiet.

"Very odd," he continued, looking up into the trees, as if they were his last resource. "I could have declared it was just at my elbow."

"So could I," replied a voice from the water.

But the sound had to pass through the stalks of so many reeds that he was still undecided as to its direction, and gazed about him some time before he saw the white dresses of the girls and their bright hair, which they had decorated with chaplets of

the idean-vine, some wreaths of which hung down from the trees.

"Do come in, uncle," said Marion, "we are going to dine here."

"My dears, you don't want me," he replied, looking down on their smiling faces with affectionate admiration.

"O yes, indeed we do, Mr. Raeburn," cried Elizabeth; "pray come and join us."

Mr. Raeburn turned and saw a cavalcade advancing slowly through the wood, with the dairy-maid at the head and the gardener behind, bringing various baskets covered with vine-leaves, and presenting a tempting appearance. Presently Mrs. Greyson appeared, and seemed rather dismayed when she saw the floating nature of their asylum. She, however, consented to dine on board with them; and, with Mr. Raeburn's help and the dairy-maid's, the embarkation of herself, a cold fowl, a cold custard-pudding, a basket of strawberries, and sundry knives, forks, and plates, was easily effected, after which Mr. Raeburn joined the party, and they commenced their noon-day meal with infinite relish.

The dairy-maid, who remained standing on the bank, was dismissed, with an injunction to bring a quantity more cowslips to be picked. And the girls showed their nest to the new-comers with as much delight as if it had been "treasure trove" of a kind never before seen in those parts.

"O the delightful sky!" said Marion, looking up through a gap in the trees; "how blue it is."

"O the delightful child, how happy she is,"—

"Dear uncle, you are always so pleased with us for being happy. You seem to think it a kind of merit in us to enjoy ourselves. But, uncle—but, mamma," continued Marion, appealing to her mother with more gravity and earnestness than the occasion seemed to call for, "don't you think it is quite time my uncle left off calling me a child, considering that I am sixteen; and considering"—

"Considering that I am already as tall as my mother," said Mr. Raeburn, taking up her words.

Marion, who was seated close to Mr. Raeburn, and supporting herself on her elbow, looked up at him, and answered:—"No; but really, uncle, if people always hear you say, 'My child,' they will never remember that I am nearly grown up."

"So you are sixteen, my dear," said the Rector, taking up one of Marion's small hands and spreading out the fingers upon his own large palm. "Well, I suppose you think it is something to be sixteen. Why, I shall be eight or nine and forty in a few days, and I do not expect to feel at all proud on the occasion."

Dora looked at Marion as she still continued with her blue eyes fixed on the Rector's face, and thought she had never seen anything more exquisitely

childlike than the tender expression of her guileless face.

"O no, uncle," she answered, with perfect simplicity; "I am not at all proud; but I think you talk to me more as if I were a child than you do to other girls of my age."

"If I do, it is because I love you more."

"When you are a few years older, Marion," said her mother, "you will wish you could have people who are fond of you say as they do now,—'We must excuse her for this or that little act of folly, for she is but a child.'"

Marion smiled a half-incredulous smile, and held out her hand for a leaf full of strawberries which her mother had selected for Mr. Raeburn.

"So you young ladies have actually brought books with you," said he, as she gave them to him. "This must have been your doing, Miss Paton, for I cannot give Marion credit for being so studious." As he spoke he brought up two large volumes from the bottom of the boat.

"Yes, I acknowledge that I brought them," said Dora, "but they have never been opened."

"Something about Nineveh, and 'Modern Painters.' Well, I suppose you preferred to study the book of nature this beautiful day." He continued to turn over the leaves, and presently read aloud the following sentences from the last-mentioned book:—

"The noblest scenes of the *earth* can be known

and seen but by few. It is not intended that man should live always in the midst of them. He injures them by his presence; he ceases to feel them if he is always with them; but the *sky* is for all. Bright as it is, it is not "too bright nor good for human nature's daily food." It is fitted in all its functions for the perpetual comfort and exalting of the heart. . . . And yet we never attend to it—we never make it a subject of thought but as it has to do with our diurnal sensations. We look upon all by which it speaks to us more clearly than to brutes—upon all which bears witness to the intention of the Supreme, that we are to receive more from the covering vault than the light and the dew, which we share with the weed and the worm—only as a succession of meaningless and monotonous accident, too common and too vain to be worthy of a moment of thought or a glance of admiration. If in a moment of utter idleness and insipidity we turn to the sky as a last resource, which of its phenomena do we speak of? One says it has been wet, and another, it has been windy, and another, it has been warm.'

"Sweeping censure this, Miss Paton. Do you plead guilty?"

"No," said Dora; "but I do think the study of the beautiful for its own sake seems very little thought of, especially the looking for it in simple external things."

"The spirit of the age is certainly very matter-

of-fact, both in a religious, social, and political point of view. Marion, my dear child—my dear young woman, I mean—what are you about? you must not lean over so much to my side; you make the boat rock. Actually, while we talk about the spirit of the age, that child thinks of nothing but cowslip stalks!”

“I am listening, uncle, indeed,” said Marion; “but here come the fresh cowslips.”

“Listen or not as you like, child; I don’t know that our talk was worth hearing.”

“There are some interesting passages in that book about the clouds,” said Dora; “do you remember them, aunt?”

“Yes; but I do not agree with the author, that mankind in general are unobservant of the appearance of the sky. Perhaps we have not so many persevering cloud-gazers as star-gazers; and there are certainly a vast number of people who go through the world with their eyes shut; but I think all who do observe, observe the sky.”

“I cannot recal any beautiful landscape that I have seen,” said Dora, “without also remembering what kind of sky made up its background.”

“And how full the poets are of cloud-and-sky scenes,” remarked Elizabeth. “Do you remember, aunt, in those lines called ‘Mathew,’ how beautifully, after describing the feelings of the old man on going out with his fishing-rod, Wordsworth makes the presence of a certain cloud hanging in the sky

remind him of an April morning thirty years ago, and he says—

“ ‘ My eyes are dim with childish tears,
My heart is idly stirred ;
For the same sounds are in my ears
That on *that* day I heard.’

And then he goes on to compare ‘yon cloud with that long purple cleft’ with the cloud seen in his youth, and treasured in his memory for so many years.”

“ And what can be more exquisite than that cloud, which we all fancy we must have seen, in Wilson’s sonnet, beginning—

“ ‘ A cloud lay cradled near the setting sun,
A gleam of crimson tinged its braided snow.’

Surely every line of that sonnet is beautiful ; but our sense of its beauty is chiefly derived from our all having observed and delighted in such a cloud. But whether or not, we may be justly accused of neglecting to derive instruction and pleasure from the sky : it is certain that, in general, we do not pay sufficient attention to the beauty of natural objects.”

“ But, aunt, I thought the prevailing fault at present was said to be a kind of worship of nature. In fact, to hear some people talk, one would almost think that if we only listened with sufficient reverence to the teachings of nature, there would be no need of revelation at all.”

"I was not thinking of such persons, my dear ; it is some of those who recognise the highest principles that I think deficient in a due acknowledgment of the beauty that surrounds them. If we shut our eyes to the beauty which lives and breathes around us, we act ungratefully, and do not enjoy all the happiness intended for us."

"Mamma," said Marion, "look."

Mrs. Greyson turned and looked down the smooth river. Sunbeams slanted across it, and here and there touched the water or the leaves. Some water-hens were diving at no great distance, and the green reflection of the trees lay in vivid distinctness all around them. But it was not to any of these things that Marion had wished to call attention. Through the gap in the branches one pure white cloud was visible, lying, small and distinct, in the deep sky, and its image, like a white swan, was reflected down into the water.

It was too beautiful to talk of, Elizabeth said ; and they continued to watch it till it was gradually withdrawn.

"I shall add the recollection of that cloud to the list of my possessions," said Dora ; "it will be a pleasure to me in future that no outward circumstances can take from me—something absolutely my own."

"In addition to your harp, your watch, and your work-box, Dora," said Elizabeth, with her usual gay good humour.

"You are not at all romantic, I see, Miss Paton," remarked the Rector, with a smile.

"A good thing for me," returned Elizabeth, "for I shall suit the better with the spirit of the age."

"I hope something better for you than that you should suit with the age in most of its characteristics," returned the Rector, speaking with his accustomed hesitation; "with its characteristic industry, for instance, which, though it cannot be happy unless it gets through a great deal of work, wants to cast aside the labour of hand and heart, and do it all in a delegated way, and, as it were, by machinery.

"We even carry this desire into our religion, and having set a great deal of religious machinery to work, we are inclined to wonder that it does not produce the regenerating effect we expected.

"But we are in a great hurry; we cannot stop to inquire the reason. We must have something to exhibit for our trouble, and we must have it quickly. Certainly our machinery has produced a great effect, and if we have our misgivings as to whether it is a good one, we are obliged to keep them to ourselves, for there is so much to be acted that the time for reflection is wanting.

"I should also be inclined to accuse the age of imitating machinery in another way. A few machines will do the work of thousands of men; they act as agents and delegates, and take the labours from human hands. Now, in our religion we have

come to think that we will have agents and delegates also. Great masses of people consider it too much trouble to think for themselves, or to undertake the duties, and study the principles of Christianity in their own persons. Virtually, they say to their priests, 'Do the labour of religion for us; pray you the prayers we ought to offer up; be our substitutes; believe for us, act for us; and in return we will give you a portion of our gold, which we will lay like a sacrifice upon the altar. We do not pray that fire from heaven may descend upon it, for the age is not superstitious, and we know that the days of miracles are passed.' So they satisfy their consciences. And as for that hidden influence which comes down like dew upon the tender herbs, it is unseen and unobtrusive, therefore often overlooked and forgotten; for we have not time to look deeply into anything."

"My dear Mr. Raeburn," said Mrs. Greyson, "you are surely severe upon the age."

"Am I?" he answered, taking out his watch. "Yes, and there sits Marion, in a state of amazement; she cannot tell what I mean. Do you know how time is slipping away?—it is nearly four o'clock. I believe I must take my departure; but can I first help you to land?"

The girls reluctantly consented to leave their boat, but the heat of the sun was now moderated by a soft breeze, and as they had finished their cowslips they had no excuse for staying longer, so they stepped

on shore, previously sending all the cowslip stalks floating down the river. The maids were quite delighted with the great mass of flowers that they found heaped up for them in the boat.

Mrs. Greyson rode home on a rough little pony, and Dora walked beside her. They passed the maids at the corner of the wood: they had lighted a fire, and hung their kettle to the branch of a tree, in true rural fashion. Elizabeth thought she should hardly have known the landscape, it was so much altered by the opposite direction of the shadows and the different lights on the water. She also began to feel her old liking for Mr. Raeburn revive; and as he walked home with herself and Marion, one on each arm, his affectionate tenderness for the latter touched Elizabeth with a regretful interest, and imparted so much more gentleness to her manner, that she seemed altogether a different person; and Marion could not but admire her face, so greatly were her eyes brightened and her complexion heightened. Mr. Raeburn took his leave after bringing them to their own door, and Marion asked her cousins to be quick in changing their morning dresses. "We are going to drink tea with the Maidleys," she said; "we always do on alternate Thursdays."

"All your fashions in this part of the world are unchangeable," said Dora. "Are the Maidleys as fond of clever talk as ever; and do they still always have Devonshire posset for supper?"

"Mr. Maidley is very fond of instructing, and I

dare say he will show you either some geological specimens, or talk about botany: you know he has made a collection of dried plants. Mrs. Maidley is proud of her Devonshire cream; so I dare say you will spend the evening much as you have done several former ones."

" 'I dare say!' Dora, how cautiously this little thing expresses herself! 'Mr. Maidley is fond of instructing,' quoth she. Why don't you say at once, Marion, that he is determined to cram one with his learning, and that he is a great bore?"

Marion laughed, but made no answer.

"I wish you would imitate her caution," said Dora.

"I did not intentionally speak with caution," replied Marion, and was going to add, "I do not dislike to be instructed," but remembered that she should thereby imply a reproach to Elizabeth.

Mr. Maidley was a brisk little man, with a light active figure, and restless observant eye, and such a love of acting the schoolmaster that he had educated both his own sons, and young Greyson also, though his means would very well have admitted of his sending them to school.

Mrs. Maidley was also a small person, and had a neat, delicate figure, and very quiet manners. This couple were blessed with five towering sons and daughters, two of the former and three of the latter; they were magnified images of their parents, but their gait was less brisk, and their voices were louder

and deeper. They all had red hair, easy, good-humoured manners, and imperturbable self-possession, which latter quality they certainly had not inherited from their mother, who sometimes looked a little flurried when they were all moving about round her ; their heads came so near the tops of the doors, and they so completely filled up their cottage home, that they gave her much the appearance of a nervous hen in possession of a turkey's brood.

But she was proud of them, and with reason. Never was a milder, more docile set of young giants. They were clever, too ; and both physically and intellectually they made Dora and Elizabeth look small.

They received their guests with vociferous joy ; but Frank had evidently forgotten his childish partiality for Elizabeth, and talked of nothing all the evening but some new chemical experiments, by which he declared he could blow up the world itself, if he could only get far enough into it. He was obliging enough to take a great deal of trouble in explaining the matter to the girls ; but they looked upon him as a tiresome, uninteresting youth, and did not even affect to care for his wonderful experiments.

As Dora had expected, they had some Devonshire posset for supper ; it appeared in a bowl suited to the dimensions of the young people, one of whom, however—namely, Peter, the younger son—was absent the greater part of the evening.

The wheels of Mrs. Greyson's phaeton were heard at the door before supper was quite over, but the whole party rose at once and proceeded to assist in cloaking and shawling, and what Will Greyson called the stowage of the craft. Mrs. Greyson and Will sat in front, the latter being steersman, and the three girls got in behind, together with a music-book that Dora had borrowed, and three pots full of choice young calceolarias, struck by Frank for Marion, also some geraniums, with their roots tied up in cabbage leaves, and some quinces,—for the Maidleys were bountiful people; and they liked apple-pie for supper, and apple-pie flavoured with quinces; so as Mrs. Greyson had no quinces in her garden they always provided her with an abundant supply.

The girls were wedged into the back of the carriage and had scarcely room to move, when Peter made his appearance, quite out of breath, with his straw hat full of nuts; these he handed over the back of the carriage to Marion, a pair of crackers lying on the top of them.

"O Peter," exclaimed Marion, almost in despair, "Peter, do please take these back; what am I to do with them? It was extremely kind of you to get them, but you had better eat them yourself."

Peter was Marion's age, and was supposed to be tenderly affected towards her.

"No, Marion, keep them yourself," he gallantly answered, as he held on by the back of the carriage,

which was already in motion, and going on at a foot's-pace with its load. "I went to Swanstead wood to get them. You can't think how milky they are. Eat as many as you can yourself, Marion. I'll come for my hat to-morrow. I've put in a pair of crackers, in case you and the Miss Patons would like some on the way home."

So saying he took his leave. Elizabeth made room for the plants, and Marion, with her lap full of nuts, commenced cracking them.

"What are you about, my dear?" said her mother, turning round. "What is that noise? I hope the springs are not giving way. What are you all laughing at?"

Elizabeth explained the cause.

"Ridiculous boy!" said the mamma, in a tone of some annoyance.

"But it was a chivalrous action," said Dora. "He rose from his untasted supper and darted off when we remarked that Marion used to be fond of nutting when she was a little child."

"Yes," said Elizabeth, "it really was something for *him* to do. What a pity it is those Maidleys should be so fond of eating!"

"Devoted to it," observed Will Greyson. "Do you know, mother, I have observed that almost all very clever people are fond of eating."

"Have you, my dear? I should not have thought you had many opportunities of judging."

"Now you mention it, Will, I really think I

have observed the same thing," said Elizabeth. "How can it be accounted for, aunt?"

"The fact must be established, my dear, before we need account for it. My boy, if you do not keep at a foot's-pace we shall certainly break down."

So at a foot's-pace they went home in the starlight, Marion cracking her nuts the while, and distributing them to the rest of the party.

"Elizabeth," said Dora, when they were alone in their room, "what a happy lot Marion's is; so free from all care and responsibility."

"Responsibility," repeated Elizabeth, laughing, "why, my dear Dora, she does not differ in that respect from you and me."

"Indeed, I don't agree with you. How can the eldest daughter in a large family be free from responsibility? She has at least her example to answer for. But the reason I think Marion so happy is that she is the first object of interest to several people; they think for her, and are as tender over her as if she really were a child. How serene she evidently is, and no wonder, so secure as she must be of affection, and such a life of quiet happiness as she has before her."

"But my aunt is in very delicate health," observed Elizabeth. "I am sure she was very different the last time we were here."

"Yes, she could walk with us. We shall see how papa thinks her looking when he comes."

Mrs. Greyson had a cold the next day, and did

not go out for an airing as usual. Dora recurred to her idea that her aunt was changed, but she could see no reflection of her anxiety in the faces of the old servants, and neither Marion nor Mr. Raeburn seemed to think anything particular the matter.

Their father arrived in a few days, and Dora resolved not to be an alarmist. The first time he was alone with his daughters he remarked upon her altered appearance.

"It was strange," he said, "that at her age she should be so infirm."

"My aunt has long been in weak health," said Elizabeth, "but if she was worse than usual her children would have mentioned it."

"True, true," he answered, and seemed glad to take his daughter's view of the subject; but it did not quite satisfy him, for he presently remarked that it would be very little out of his way to return to Westport by Swanstead and take another peep at his sister. "Besides," he added, "you are doubly related to these cousins, and I should not like you to grow up in ignorance of one another."

The girls were pleased with this plan; it made their parting with Marion quite a different matter, and their aunt brightened up so much during her brother's visit, that they left her without any apprehensions.

It was a brilliant morning. The dew lay thickly on the grass, for it had not struck five, when Dora stole into their aunt's chamber to kiss

her and take their leave. Marion was up and dressed ; she made breakfast for them and packed strawberries and cake in a basket for their refreshment on the journey. The phaeton was at the door. Mr. Paton had persuaded his sister to let her son accompany him and his daughter, and Will Greyson, full of joy, was heaping it with luggage.

He ran softly up stairs to take leave of his mother.

"Now, my dears," exclaimed their uncle, "no more last words, or we shall certainly miss the train. Three weeks hence you will see us again, Marion. Come, my dear, let the boy go."

"I am coming, uncle," cried Will, getting up behind. "Take care of mamma, Marion ; and mind you see that all my creatures are fed."

And so they drove off, leaving Marion standing in the porch, looking the picture of serenity.

"She is certainly born to be happy," thought Dora.

Both the girls were delighted with Marion, and they might have talked and thought about her more if they had not been in the full enjoyment of their first tour. The weather was faultless, and their father was so determined that they should see everything worth looking at, that they thought they had never been so happy before.

In three or four days they got a letter from Marion, inclosing a note from her mother to Will. She was delighted that he was enjoying himself so

much, and thought she was all the better for the little peep she had had of her brother and his children.

"Now you will see, Dora," said Elizabeth, "that papa will not go home by Swanstead. I know he wishes to go up by the lakes, and my aunt's cheerful way of writing will determine him that there is nothing the matter."

The event proved that she was right. Other letters followed, all cheerful; and Mr. Paton gave out one morning at Chester, that he had changed his plans, and meant to travel northward.

"Poor Marion," said Dora, "she will be very much disappointed."

"Oh, papa will let us visit her in the winter," remarked Elizabeth; "and you know, Dora, you would not like to give up the lakes for the sake of seeing her again now."

"Certainly not. We are not required to do so. What is this scheme of papa's about Wilfred?"

"Have you not seen him since he wrote to my aunt? Oh, it is to ask her if she will let him go abroad."

"My aunt will not like to part with him while he is so young."

"But papa thinks he ought to see a little of the world,—he is such a child for his years; and no wonder, always living in that country-place. Besides, Mr. Lodge is going abroad with his three pupils, and told papa he should like to take another.

My aunt cannot fail to see what a good opportunity this would be for Will to go with safety and advantage; and they are only to be away two months."

Two or three days after this, as the party were strolling on the borders of Windermere, Mr. Paton drew Will aside and informed him, with a little stately circumlocution, of a letter received that morning consenting to the plan above mentioned. Wilfred was wild with delight; a tour in Switzerland was a hitherto unhopcd-for bliss. He could not be grateful enough to his uncle for having planned it.

He set off that same night with a letter of introduction from his uncle to Mr. Lodge, previously writing home to his mother to thank her for her kindness.

The Paton family then pursued their tour, and it must be confessed that they enjoyed it more now their restless cousin was withdrawn. Dora felt it a "responsibility" to have him with them, for he was a daring, inquisitive boy; he loved climbing among ruins; and made her very nervous by his determination to see all he could of the machinery whenever they took him with them over a manufactory.

They returned to Westport, having heard several times from Marion during their absence. In the first letter she said her mother was much as usual, only that the hot weather made her languid; in

the next she spoke of her as poorly, but said nothing to excite alarm. Dora, however, was of an anxious disposition, and though Marion said so little she began to wish they had not sent Will Greyson away; but the sight of her mother, her brother and sister, and her cheerful home, banished these thoughts for a while, and she and Elizabeth retired to rest very much fatigued.

It was late when they awoke the next morning and saw their old nurse, who still lived with them, quietly opening the shutters. She let a little light into their room to awake them more effectually, and then said, coming up to the side of the bed,—“Did you young ladies know how late it was? It wants but five minutes to ten.”

“What will papa say?” said Elizabeth, half rising; “why did you not call us before, nurse?”

“Your papa gave particular orders that you were not to be disturbed. Miss Paton, are you awake, my dear?”

“O yes, nurse; you make too much noise for me to sleep. I wish you would ask papa for my bunch of keys,—our boxes must be opened.”

“Your papa is out, Miss.”

“Out so early?”

“You heard no noise in the night, then, my dears? you did not hear the carriage come round?”

“The carriage!—papa go out at night in the carriage? Why, nurse, what can it mean?”

“You look frightened, Miss Paton.”

"Yes, I am frightened. What do you mean, nurse?"

"Your papa and mamma were sent for in the night to go to Swanstead."

"O my aunt,—she is very ill then, and Wilfred away! O Elizabeth, how very sad!"

"What was the message, nurse?" asked Elizabeth; "I wish to know."

"I did not hear the message, Miss. Your mamma left her best love for you."

"Let us be alone, nurse," said Dora, with a trembling sigh; "we shall get up presently."

"Poor dear Marion," said Elizabeth, with tears; "I hope my aunt is not in danger."

But when they did get up and leave their room, they found the blinds of the house drawn down and the shutters shut.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LIGHT IN THE IVYED CASEMENT.

MARION was so completely exhausted by fatigue and wakefulness, that when she had seen her mother die, and felt that all motive for exertion was now over, she sunk at once into a torpid state, and was several days before she seemed fully to realize her loss. The body had subdued the mind, and it was not until its imperative demands for rest were answered, that she perceived the bitterness of the trial.

"Marion, my dear child," said her aunt, endeavouring to soothe her after a paroxysm of weeping, "do let me see you at least trying to be resigned; you are only exhausting your health and making us miserable. What good can this violent grief do?"

Marion rested her aching head against the cushion of the sofa, and thought she should never be happy again. She became worse as the time of the funeral approached, and exhibited all the peevishness of over-wrought feeling. But the most sorrowful eyes cannot weep for ever. On the day after,

having passed a sleepless night, she came down into the breakfast-room much calmer than usual, and her aunt being quite alarmed at her paleness, caused her to lie down on the couch, where, to their great relief, she presently fell into a deep heavy sleep; and they closed the window shutters, hoping that she might wake refreshed.

There were many things to be transacted in the family, and they were glad to be able to leave her for a while, which they did, setting the door open, and going in from time to time to look at her.

Mr. Raeburn had been appointed joint guardian with her uncle, and the two gentlemen were now in the library.

It had been agreed that it was useless to wait for the return of Wilfred before reading the will, and as it was absolutely necessary that Mr. Paton should return to Westport the following day, the two guardians decided that it should be done that same afternoon.

Mrs. Greyson had expressed a wish that her brother should take the charge of her son, and that he should finish his education at Westport: Mr. Raeburn was therefore not without hope that the other child might be left with him, but when he mentioned the subject to her uncle and aunt, he saw at once that it was a thing they had not contemplated; and Mr. Paton said he had intended to provide a home for his niece in his own house, considering himself as of course her natural protector.

Mrs. Paton, however, seeing how much pain this proposal gave, observed that perhaps there might be something in the will which would direct them.

"I can scarcely think it," replied the Rector, "but I cannot but feel that if Mrs. Greyson had been able to speak, she would have directed me to take her daughter, for she knows I have always loved her as my own."

"In our character as guardians we are, of course, equal," said Mr. Paton, politely but determinedly, and then added, "Marion is an unusually happy young person, to have two homes ready to receive her; but my near relationship to her mother seems to point out so clearly to which she should go."

"Certainly," interrupted Mr. Raeburn, "in relationship we are not equal, nor as parents, for you possess all your children, and I have lost both mine."

"Let me beg of you to leave the question till the will has been read," said Mrs. Paton.

Mr. Paton consented coldly. He could not be said to feel any particular fondness for Marion, whom he had never seen since her infancy till this mournful occasion; but she was his sister's child and only daughter of his wife's brother, and it seemed to him rather derogatory that she should reside with those who were not of her kindred, when he was so well able to receive her.

However, during the next half-hour he reflected

that Mr. Raeburn was a man of property, and that by taking Marion away he might deprive her of a handsome fortune,—he therefore determined that at least he would not do so ungraciously, and that if there was nothing in the will to decide the matter, he would agree to his wife's proposal, that it should be left to Marion's own choice whether she would go or stay.

"I have just been to look at Marion," said Mrs. Paton to the Rector, as he rose to take his leave. "I find she is awake, and if you would go and talk to her I should be very glad; perhaps you might inculcate a little more resignation, and if she is to be present at the reading of the will, she should be prepared for it beforehand."

"Certainly, I will go to her," he replied, "and see what I can do; though," he continued to himself as he went down the long passage, "I want some one to inculcate resignation to me if I am to part with her."

The door of the breakfast-room was ajar; he entered quietly and shut it behind him. The shutters were still closed, and two long sunbeams slanted through the heart-shaped holes into the room. Marion had dropped asleep again. There was a vacant chair at her head, and he came and sat beside her to wait for her waking. Her face was very pale, and looked still more so by contrast with her golden hair and deep mourning dress. Her attitude and expression told of the weariness of

exhausted feeling, and her sleep seemed disturbed, for she started often and spoke hurriedly. At length she woke in a state of great agitation, and started up entreating him to do her some kindness, which she did not sufficiently explain. Her feverish manner disturbed him; and supposing her to be scarcely awake, he spoke soothingly to her, trying to calm her excitement, but in the tone of a person enduring so much himself that it struck upon her sharpened senses; and with the unreasonable irritation of over-wrought feeling she said, "Why do you talk to me, uncle? it only makes me worse. I am tired of their telling me to be resigned."

"My dear," he answered, with a heavy sigh, "comfort is from God. I do not try to comfort you. You and I are companions now in suffering."

Marion did not let him go on, but burst into a passion of tears, and hid her face in her hands, sobbing out, "Do not say *companions*, uncle: have I not lost my mother?" But the words were scarcely uttered before she began to reproach herself, and wondered how she could have repelled his kindness.

"And do you think I have no fellow-feeling, my dear child?" he replied. "Are you saying to yourself, 'there is no sorrow like my sorrow?'"

"I did not mean to be ungrateful, dear uncle," said Marion, attempting to cease weeping and collect her thoughts; "I know what your sorrows are."

"You *know*," repeated Mr. Raeburn in a low voice, which seemed not meant for her ears. "No, dear child, the heart *only* knoweth its own bitterness ; but you will soon know of another trial which even now hangs over me."

Marion's convulsive sobbing was not stopped by this ; it seemed quite to overpower her. She tried to recover herself, and heard Mr. Raeburn reproach himself for having made her worse. At length, with a violent effort she subdued it, and said, with passionate earnestness, "I should be better if I could sleep. Oh, the misery of my nights ! I cannot bear it, uncle, and how can you ? I did not think that anything could have added to my grief the last fortnight, but that does."

"What does ?" inquired Mr. Raeburn, surprised.

"I have watched it for so many years," sobbed Marion, scarcely knowing what she said ; "every night I saw the light in the nursery. It used to stay only a little while, but since mamma died it shines nearly all night. Oh, dear uncle, I cannot bear it, and how can you ? Do not break my heart, —what is it, then, has made you so miserable ?"

As he did not answer, she turned to look at him, and was astonished at the effect her words had produced. She had never alluded to this subject before to him, even in the most distant manner. He believed that his nightly visits to the deserted chamber were unseen of any human eye, now he found they had been fully known, and that to the

only person who could in any degree make up to him for the loss of the dead.

His face became pale, and he set his lips with a steady effort to bear down the outward expression of his thoughts, and then started up and paced the room with rapid steps. Marion sat up, and watched him, subdued by the sight of the struggle which she herself had caused. At length it ceased. He came and sat at the foot of the couch, and covering his face with his hands, gave way to an agony of grief, such as it awed her to look at.

In all the misfortunes that he had gone through, she had never seen him shed a single tear; she had heard nothing more than the short, suppressed sigh which often interrupted his conversation. She was now subdued and terrified by the strong character of his passion, and his unsuccessful struggles against it. It frightened her for the time from the remembrance of her own loss, and she sprung from the sofa, stung with remorse for what she had done, and throwing herself on her knees before him, tried to draw away his hands, and entreated his forgiveness, as if she had really done him some grievous wrong.

"Only this once forgive me," she urged in a supplicating tone; "I will never be so cruelly thoughtless again." But he only clasped his hands the tighter, and seemed incapable of making any answer.

Marion pressed her pale cheek against his hands

and continued, "Do not think of it, my dear, dear uncle, I did not know what I was saying; do not love me any the less for it; O do speak to me! Am I not your child? have I not always loved you like a——"

She hesitated to go on, for Mr. Raeburn's sudden resumption of his self-command startled her—he hastily dashed away his tears, and drew her nearer as she knelt. The room was not so dusk but that she could see his eyes intensely fixed upon her; she knew what he wished her to say, and went on with her sentence: "Have you not always made up to me for my lost father? and have not I always loved you like a daughter?"

The sigh of relief with which he let go her hands, told her that she had found the right clue for subduing the emotion she had caused; but she did not venture to say more, and remained in her kneeling position, while he arose hastily and again walked about the room to recover himself.

Marion turned half round and watched his face as it rapidly changed to its ordinary calmness; for the first time since her mother's death her thoughts had been forced into another channel, and now occupied themselves with the friend for whom she had always felt a filial affection.

She had not had time yet to think as to what might be her future destiny, the idea of leaving this old home had never presented itself to her, nor the question of what provision might remain

for her and her brother. She considered, as she continued to watch the Rector with her eyes, that she would certainly devote herself to making his future life as happy as possible, and did not remember that anything could separate them, though as her thoughts became more distinct she recollected that he had spoken of some fresh trial, and wondered whether his wife was ill, for she had not lately inquired after her.

At length, as she still knelt, he began to talk to her, and to her surprise, of his family misfortune, which he mentioned with a kind of desperate composure, which Marion dreaded to hear, though she could not interrupt him. He seemed as much impelled to speak now as in general to be silent; his natural reserve was gone for a time, but at the first pause she began a reply, and was unconsciously led on by the desire to soothe, till she had produced the tranquillity she wished, by her evident anxiety to do so. The sound of her voice, as unusual in its earnestness as his own, surprised him into silence; she spoke with such energy as he had never given her credit for, he was astonished and touched to find that the dear child whom he had loved so long, had become a woman in soul when he most wanted her support. But in proportion as he grew calm, Marion's self-possession deserted her, and tears began to drop down her cheeks. Mr. Raeburn had stood still, the better to listen to her, and when she ceased to speak,

he returned to his place on the sofa, and took her head between his hands.

"Dear uncle," said Marion, "there is no one left now but you and Wilfred, and how can I ever be happy again if I see one of you miserable?"

"No one left but me and Wilfred?"

"No one whose happiness matters in comparison with yours; why do you look at me so intently, my dear, dear uncle? you always knew that we both loved you next best to mamma."

"Yes, I know it," was the reply; "therefore call me father, it is a long time since I heard that name applied to myself, and I shall know that you are not quite orphaned if you can use it to me."

"I do call you my father," said Marion, taking up his hand and laying it on her head, "I have called you so in my heart many times, but O father, I never wanted your love so much before."

She put her arms round him, and heard him pray for her, as his hand rested on her head; they were very low words, she could not distinguish half of them, but she perceived that he spoke of her as if she had truly been his own child, and when he ceased, and raised her from her kneeling position, there was an expression in his smile that she had not seen for years; but she had scarcely time to remark it before he told her that he must return home for a while, and begged that she would go out into the open air, and take a short walk in the

garden. Marion assented ; he took leave of her for the present, and promised to seek her aunt to go out with her. Being now left alone, she opened the shutters and threw up the window. The weather had been showery, but the sun was out, and the garden had never looked more beautiful : she stood looking out on the green lawn and the rose beds with a more tranquillized heart ; for the first time since her misfortune she had been roused out of herself, and her over-excited feelings had been relieved by sympathy with another.

When her aunt came in with Marion's crape bonnet in her hand, with its long black veil, she received them very calmly, and went out with her to walk in the more retired part of the garden. The Rector had signified to Mrs. Paton that he had not mentioned the intended reading of the will to Marion : she therefore opened the subject, and as Marion expressed herself quite able to be present, went on to hint that many things connected with her future life would be discussed afterwards and left to her own decision. "And I have no doubt, my dearest Marion," she continued, "that you will act as your uncle and I could wish."

"Certainly, aunt," said Marion wearily ; for she could not at present take much interest in business matters, and such she supposed them to be.

"And it is a most fortunate circumstance," her

aunt went on, wishing to lead to the subject of her future home, "that the lease of this house is up at Christmas."

Marion started, and for the first time the certainty that she must leave the beloved place flashed across her mind. She instantly began to question her aunt, and when she spoke with anguish of leaving the spot where her mother lay, Mrs. Paton could not help blaming herself for having proposed that her lot should be left in her own hands; but she declined to give Marion any information, telling her that these matters would all be decided after the reading of the will.

Marion was very soon fatigued, she had so long been accustomed to a darkened room, that the dazzling sunshine oppressed her, and she was glad to go in and lie down on her couch to rest.

At four o'clock her aunt, Mrs. Ferguson, came, and led her into the library, where were two gentlemen, besides her uncle and Mr. Raeburn. She felt too much confused and agitated to listen to the document, scarcely gathering from its wordy sentences the fact that it secured a very sufficient provision both for herself and her brother. This trial to her fortitude being over, and the two solicitors withdrawn, Marion, who felt no inclination to shed tears, attempted to collect her thoughts, for her aunt reminded her of their conversation, and remarked that the most important part of the proceedings was yet to come.

Her uncle was seated at a table near the window, and her aunt beside him. Mr. Raeburn, with his arms folded, was leaning against the window-frame. Mrs. Ferguson was the only person who spoke. She began by reminding Marion that her uncle and Mr. Raeburn were appointed her joint guardians; and then, after telling her that her brother would now be sent to Westport, related to her what had passed in the morning, and the decision that she should have her own choice with whom she would remain.

During this time Mr. Raeburn did not look up or change his attitude.

Marion's face varied several times from red to pale. She had great difficulty in speaking; but mastered her agitation, and gratefully thanked both him and her uncle for their goodness to her.

"And you will understand, my dear," said Mr. Paton (quite sure, however, of what her choice would be), and speaking with a certain grave stateliness which never forsook him on any occasion, "that whatever you decide, it will make no difference in the kind feelings of the other party towards you; and there is no need for you to make up your mind to-day unless you please."

"No," said Mrs. Ferguson, who felt sure that Marion's calmness would not last long; "I think it a great pity that Marion should have a night of anxiety; she must be already aware with whom she would wish to live. Let her give her decision

now,—it will spare her the harass of another discussion. Come, my love," she continued, pitying Marion's paleness, "it now wants ten minutes to six; we will give you till the clock strikes."

Marion was grateful for the permission to decide so soon, but she would not appear too hasty; and her own mind being already made up, she sat with her eyes fixed on the clock, the colour gradually fading out of her face. Her uncle, Mr. Paton, also looked at the clock, and nodded to his niece with a kind of stately patronage. And Mr. Raeburn looked at it, but never changed his attitude or glanced towards Marion. He had quite made up his mind, in spite of her affection for him, that she would go with her aunt and uncle; and when he thought of his own dull home, and, on the other hand, of the kind-hearted, lively cousins ready to welcome her, he almost wondered how he could have wished to keep her from them.

At last the clock struck, but not before both the ladies had fretted themselves into a perfect fidget.

Marion, who had been seated with her hands pressed together and her face quite colourless, now started up and made a few hasty steps towards the window, then turned towards her aunt and uncle, as if still irresolute; not that she felt so, but their unmerited kindness overpowered her.

"Now, my dear," Mrs. Ferguson began, trying to reassure her, "it is time for you to speak, Marion."

"Dear aunt," said Marion, addressing Mrs. Paton, and speaking in a scarcely audible voice, "how very good you have been to me! I shall love you as long as I live, both for mamma's sake and your own. Dear uncle, I am very grateful."

"Tut, tut," said Mr. Paton, now looking on the matter as settled, "all very natural and proper; only my duty, my dear."

Marion then came up to Mr. Raeburn, took his hands in hers, and attempted to speak, but could not for her tears.

The action and her grief were very like a farewell, and he evidently so understood them. But Mrs. Ferguson was not of the same opinion, and was determined that there should be no mistake.

"Your decision is yet to come," she said, in a calm, distinct voice, as Marion still wept and held by Mr. Raeburn. "Do you decide to go, or do you decide to stay?"

"My dear madam," said Mr. Raeburn, speaking in the same suppressed manner as in the morning, "your niece has already given her decision. I have nothing to say against it. May the blessing of God go with her!"

He laid his hand upon her head. But Mrs. Ferguson still pressed the point.

"If it is given, let us hear it, Marion. What do you decide?"

"I decide to stay," said Marion, and a short pause of surprise from all parties followed.

"Very well," said Mrs. Ferguson, breaking this awkward silence; "then we will not prolong this scene any longer." So saying, she advanced, and taking Marion's hand, led her away, adding, in a reassuring tone, "And now you shall come and take some rest, for it makes us quite anxious to see you looking so ill."

Marion had scarcely ever felt so grateful as for this considerate kindness. She stood in great need of quiet, and could not make her appearance again that night.

The light never appeared in the nursery again; and the Rector's face, as he sat in his study, looked more cheerful than for a long time past. When he came home that evening, he told his mother, who now resided with him, that she would soon have Marion for a companion; and the old lady, being very fond of her, was greatly pleased.

The news soon spread among the servants, who were also glad, the presence of a younger inmate promising to relieve the dulness of their home. And as Mr. Raeburn sat writing in his study, he heard the unexpected words, "I decide to stay," repeated as the echo of every sound which broke the silence.

The following morning Mr. Paton left Swanstead, and took a kind leave of Marion. The two ladies were to remain for another fortnight. There were many things to be arranged; the house and

furniture were to be sold; but various little personal possessions of the late Mrs. Greyson had to be selected as memorials for her relatives and friends; while Marion found it enough for her weak spirits and little strength to select the books which had been her mother's favourites, to be divided between herself and her brother.

Mr. Raeburn saw but little of her during this time, being naturally anxious to leave her to the society of her aunts.

He had desired his housekeeper to prepare a room for her, and to give her the choice as to which she would prefer.

It wanted but three days to the time when she was to take up her abode at the Rectory, when one evening, as old Mrs. Raeburn sat dozing in her easy chair, while the Rector mused in silence over the events of the day, the housekeeper came in to inform him that she had been over to deliver his message; that Miss Greyson seemed tired and in low spirits, and she thought must have made a mistake in the room she said she wished for.

"However, Sir," continued the housekeeper, "I thought I'd mention it to you; you said you thought she would like the blue room."

"Which does she wish for?" inquired the Rector.

"Miss Greyson did not name any particular room," returned the housekeeper, "but said she

should like to overlook the church-yard, which seemed very natural, Sir; and, if possible, she should like to be able to see her old house."

"And there is no such room, you say?" observed Mr. Raeburn, considering. "No, I do not think there is." And he actually began to revolve, in his over-indulgent fondness, whether he could not open a window for her in the blue room.

It was very evident to Mrs. Mathews, when she spoke to Marion, that the latter wished to have the nursery, for she was far too well acquainted with the house not to know that no other room commanded both these aspects; but thinking that it would pain her master to have it so occupied, she had gently remonstrated, and inquired whether no other room would suit Miss Greyson as well. But Marion persisted in her choice, adding, that if she might have that room she would not ask for anything to be altered in it; and then left Mrs. Mathews, saying, "Give my love to my uncle, and say, that if he would rather I did not occupy that room, I will have any other that he pleases."

"Sir," said the housekeeper, waking up her master from his brown study, "if you don't think it reasonable that Miss should have that room, she particularly told me to say that she did not mind about it; only she would *rather* have it if she might. The nursery, I mean, Sir," she continued, seeing that she had failed to insinuate her meaning.

"The nursery!" repeated Mr. Raeburn, then first

struck with Marion's real meaning. "Is that the room Miss Greyson wishes for?"

"Not unless it's quite agreeable to you, Sir," the housekeeper began; but she soon saw, by the flush of pleased surprise which spread over her master's face, that he was far from needing an apology for what had seemed to her the unreasonable caprice of a wayward girl.

"Say no more about it, Mrs. Mathews," said the Rector, "but let the room be got ready for Miss Greyson exactly as she wishes, and tell her that no other choice would have pleased me half so well."

"Very well, Sir," said the functionary, curtsying and leaving the room, a little nettled to find, for the fortieth time, that Marion understood her master so much better than she did.

"I am coming to be his daughter," Marion had thought. "I shall see my mother's house from those little casements; I shall remember her best there, and I shall be to my uncle in the place of the little lost Euphemia. He will walk upon the lawn as he used to do when she slept there, in the summer evenings, and he will see my light shining through the curtains; he will know that the room is just the same as he has seen it through these years, with the child's picture over the chimney-piece, and the bed with the white hangings, and he will know that I am there. After a while he will forget that I am not his real child. I shall be his daughter grown up, and attending upon him, and he will not feel so lonely."

Marion put off leaving the home of her childhood to the last minute; when her aunts were gone, and all was desolate and empty, Mr. Raeburn sent his carriage for her. The distance was not more than three or four hundred yards, and she knew she should see the place every day; yet when the carriage stopped, and Mr. Raeburn led her into the house, and welcomed her, she could not thank him, or even speak, and with her veil let down over her face, ran up to her new apartment, where she could weep without restraint.

The most gloomy part of the year was coming on, and for the next three months Marion made but a sorrowful companion to the Rector; though, after a while, being urged by the old lady to resume her usual occupations, she roused herself from her inactive sorrow, and soon found the benefit of exertion, both to mind and body. She began to consider what she could do to make herself useful and beloved in her new home; and took upon herself various little offices, such as are generally performed by the daughter of a family. She made breakfast and tea, and paid a daily visit to the apartment of the poor invalid, taking care that she should always have beautiful fresh flowers before her. She also began to superintend the needlework in the girls' school, and to arrange the lending library. Moreover, she performed the part of a set of tablets to the Rector, reminding him of all his engagements; and above all, she read "The Record" to the old

lady,—a task which her son had hitherto thought it his duty to perform, and which he specially disliked. She also talked to her and amused her, with a great deal of tact, and contrived to turn the subject to something else when she teased her son about his health and his parish,—a fruitful source of irritation to him. For it may be doubted whether any other old lady, of an affectionate disposition, and very proud of her son, could have been supposed capable of unconsciously tormenting him to the degree that she did. She had a habit of alluding to the loss of his children in a very distant manner, but with sufficient meaning to distress him. If the younger Mrs. Raeburn was not so well in health as usual, “she was sure she would not last long, and indeed it would be a blessing if Providence would take her, if some people could but think so.” This never failed to agitate her son; for throughout his wife’s long illness, he had never given up the hope that she might one day be restored to him. If Marion came in from a walk with a bright colour, the old lady would privately take occasion to observe that she hoped she was not consumptive, but that, for her part, she did not like those lovely complexions.

“Marion has very good health,” the Rector would reply, disturbed, in spite of his better reason, by his mother’s hints. “I really do not see any cause for anxiety; she has a good appetite, and I never hear her cough.”

"Very true, my dear," the old lady would reply, "and these consumptive people often are very strong till they catch cold."

The feeling of anxiety thus caused, whether the supposed disease was consumption, spinal complaint, overgrowth, or indigestion, was generally half dissipated by the next sight of its object, whose face, naturally fair, and now again serene, presented no reasonable ground for anxiety to the fondest parent.

"And how is Wilfred?" the next attack would begin; "I suppose it cannot be helped, but really it seems unnatural to separate those two young people."

"Why unnatural, mother? The boy must finish his education, and he is to spend the vacations here, so that his sister will be with him three months out of the twelve."

"Ah, well, I suppose it's all for the best, but only think, if anything was to happen, what a long way they are apart. Well, it's a great responsibility to adopt a child, especially when one lives so far from all her relations. But I don't think myself," the old lady would proceed, in a musing tone, "that if they could see her now, they would remark any change; to be sure, we who see her every day cannot so well judge, but I should not say she was any thinner; I see no bad symptom excepting that bright bloom."

"That's a comfort," her son would reply, in rather a fretted tone; notwithstanding which his mother's remarks often annoyed him, and sometimes produced

more effect than the old lady had intended. However, as she was naturally an affectionate woman, and loved to extend her motherly protection towards all young things, she soon found Marion's presence a real boon, and, moreover, as she clung more and more to her adopted father, and her dutiful manner towards him came under the old lady's observation, she began to consider her as a substitute mercifully provided for the children that were lost. Marion also flattered her pride unconsciously by making all Mr. Raeburn's opinions and wishes of so much importance.

"Why don't you go out, child?" she would say, rather testily.

"Oh, because I think my uncle would like me to wait, and see whether he has any letters to copy." Upon which the old lady's next remark was sure to be made in the best of humours.

The garden and the gardener were under Marion's special care, and she spent a good deal of time in the greenhouse, occupied in the mysteries of striking, potting, budding, and forcing, so delightful to florists. It was of no use trying to teach the old lady to appreciate the beauty of certain specimens; a rose was a rose, and a tulip was a tulip, and she did not choose to see that one was better than another. As for your "white superbs," and "Prince Alberts," and "beauties of Britany," she thought it great nonsense to spend so much time in rearing them. It happened that Mr. Maidley, who was a great

florist, said one day, "Pray, Miss Greyson, why do you plant all your finest seedlings at the side of the house, where nobody can see them?"

"Nobody!" repeated Marion, looking up with a radiant smile of wonder; "why, Mr. Maidley, those beds are opposite the study windows."

"Oh, I beg a thousand pardons," returned the young gentleman, "for having made out our worthy Rector to be nobody, when it appears that he is everybody; but might I just venture to inquire whether he appreciates these flowers,—these superb calceolarias now? Do you think he could give a tolerable guess as to which is the best,—this one, stained and spotted with the deepest amber, or this pale, sickly-looking yellow one?"

"Perhaps not," said Marion, laughing; "but he is extremely fond of flowers; and if he does not know it himself, I at least know that his are of the very best."

"And very right it should be so," said the old lady, briskly, for she thought nothing too good for her son, and was not particularly fond of Frank Maidley, whose remarks on the ignorance of the former did not please her, though she felt their justice.

Many an hour, when the weather was fine, Marion spent in this garden with her small rake and watering-pot, tending her favourite petunias, and training the new varieties of fuschias on their wire supports; even the dreamy Euphemia took pleasure, such as

she was capable of, in watching her graceful movements, and the Rector was often called from his books to admire the wonderful beauty of some new specimen; for Marion, like most other flower fanciers, had a great weakness in favour of what was new.

As the spring advanced, the old lady, who had become much attached to Marion, used to give her a great deal of sage advice, and as they sat together in the small drawing-room in the front of the house, would endeavour to improve her mind by almost endless anecdotes respecting the fashions of her youth, the behaviour and manners of her various children deceased, and the last illness of her lamented husband; also, as Marion grew daily more graceful and pretty before her eyes, the old lady took care to mingle with her discourse certain sage remarks respecting the fleeting nature of beauty, not by way of direct admonition, but rather as if they arose naturally out of the subject. By this manœuvre her hearer obtained possession of the fact that she considered her very handsome, and was not more impressed with the certainty that beauty fades than might have been expected.

The room in which their mornings were spent had a deep mullioned window, with stained glass, and commanded a view of the flower-garden. Like the apartment occupied by the younger Mrs. Racburn, it was wainscotted with oak, and fitted up with very old-fashioned furniture; the walls were

enriched with several family pictures, and in the window stood a fine old walnut-tree table, at which the old lady and Marion sat, the latter generally listening with great respect to all the old lady's advice and remarks respecting her various occupations, but pursuing her own plans notwithstanding, and following her own fashions in work, drawing, and music, though constantly assailed by such remarks as the following :—" When I was a young woman we never thought of playing on the harpsichord of a morning ;" or, " When I learnt drawing we never copied from such huge ugly heads as those, or splashed in our landscapes with a brush almost as big as a hearth-brush ; but times are changed. Ah !"

" And what are you about now, my dear ?" looking up from the everlasting knitting.

" Stitching bands, madam," said Marion, holding up her work.

" Stitching, my dear ! you're always stitching. You'll wear your eyes out. Why don't you give it to the housemaid ? I'm sure she has little enough to do."

" Oh, I really could not think of such a thing," returned Marion. " I have always stitched my uncle's bands since I was seven years old, I am sure the housemaid would not take so much pains with them."

" Well, they certainly are very beautiful bands,"

said the old lady, "and who's that coming up the drive, my dear?"

"Dr. Wilmot. I think he is coming to see aunt Raeburn. He generally does on Monday."

"Oh, does he," replied the old lady, "he very seldom comes to see me I know. How very consequential the Doctor looks this morning, to be sure; and there's my son going out to speak to him, without his hat too. He might know better than to go out in the east-wind, catching the rheumatism."

"East, Mrs. Raeburn! Oh no; the wind's in the west; quite a warm wind. Look at the vane."

"Well, child, east or west, it's all the same thing."

"I'll run out to him with his hat," said Marion, quite delighted to find an excuse for rushing into the sunshine.

"Miss Greyson, I declare," exclaimed Dr. Wilmot, as Marion came up, the soft wind playing with her long hair and heightening the bloom on her cheek. "Ah," said the old man, gently touching her shoulder with the silver head of his whip, "she's very nearly eighteen years old, and what a little time it seems to look back upon!"

"Now that's what I call real golden hair," said the old lady, as she looked through the window and saw the Doctor take his leave, and her son put his hat on and walk back towards the house with Marion on his arm, the wind, after having played various freaks with her locks, finishing at last by tossing

them on to Mr. Raeburn's shoulder ; but they did not return at once to the house, that gentleman being persuaded to come into the back garden to look at two little owls.

"Owls, child !" said the Rector, "I did not know you had any."

"Oh, yes, uncle," returned Marion. "Frank Maidley brought them on Saturday. He's going back to Cambridge, and they don't like the trouble of them at home. They always forget his pets, so he begged me to take them."

"And how are they to be fed ?"

"Oh, Frank brought a bag full of mice for them, and gardener says he can get me plenty more. Here they are, in the tool-house," continued Marion, approaching the door. "I thought one of them was lost yesterday, till I saw its bright eyes peeping out from the shavings. They are fern owls, uncle. Look at them. Are they not pretty?" So saying she took out one of the impish-looking little things, and the Rector regarded it with strong disfavour ; and when Marion added, "Frank wished me to take his silkworms too, but I said I had rather not," he said with great decision, "If Frank Maidley brings any of his nasty unwholesome silkworms here I'll have 'em buried."

"Alive, uncle ?" said Marion, looking up from stroking one of the owls with her finger. Mr. Raeburn had uttered the threat in a sanguinary spirit, but not with any very definite ideas ; besides,

burying alive was not in his way ; so he remained silent.

"Because," persisted Marion, "if they are to be buried *alive* that will be very little use ; for Frank buried quantities once, and they came walking out of the ground again by dozens, and crept on to the lettuce-beds, as if nothing had happened."

Mr. Raeburn had been observed for some time past not to look with a very favourable eye on Frank Maidley ; indeed he had been known to speak of him as a "conceited young upstart." He certainly had an uncommonly high opinion of his own abilities, and was at no pains to conceal it ; but as he undoubtedly was extremely clever, and was, moreover, very ready at repartee, it was not so easy to put him down. But probably this circumstance would not have induced Mr. Raeburn to speak so slightly of his pets. The fact was, that Frank Maidley constantly walked over to service at Swanstead Church, and as constantly walked home with Marion ; not that he cared about Marion further than as a familiar friend of his childhood ; but it was not much out of his way to come to the rectory, and he was naturally of a social disposition. If Mr. Raeburn had known this he would not have looked upon the owls with such a jaundiced eye ; but as it was, he declared that they reminded him of pictures of demons, and declined to stroke them, though Marion held up the largest on her finger, saying,—

"Mr. Maidley says he wonders Frank should be so fond of pets, now he is so old, and so tall."

"Yes, I hope he is tall enough," replied Mr. Raeburn. "He must be six feet three, I should think, and nearly all legs and arms."

Marion laughed, and said,—

"Wilfred says he reminds him of scarlet runners, with his red hair."

"Oh," thought Mr. Raeburn, "at any rate I don't think it is reciprocal." "Well, my love, put the birds in and come away. After all, he is a young man of decided genius, and let us hope his peculiarities will wear off in time."

"Oh, no doubt," said Marion, wishing to say something kind of her old friend, "and so will his want of politeness."

"What, is he not polite to you?"

"Not particularly," said Marion with a merry laugh. "He says he cannot help it; he cannot be always thinking of his manners."

"Oh, indeed," replied Mr. Raeburn. "Well, my dear, as you have undertaken these owls, mind they are not neglected. Young Maidley really has many good points, my dear; so you must not mind his odd ways; and by the bye, remind me to ask him to dinner before he goes."

"Very well, uncle," returned Marion, carelessly, and they then walked back to the house, when the Rector, having shut himself in his study, took two or three turns, and indulged in a hearty fit of

laughter ; after which he sat down and indited an invitation to Frank Maidley, who in due time arrived, and behaved with most satisfactory bluntness, which pleased his host so well, that at parting he gave him several letters of introduction, so that they parted mutually delighted. Frank Maidley was guiltless of any attentions ; in fact he took but little notice of Marion, and altogether conducted himself much more like an overgrown schoolboy of brilliant parts than a young man in his last year at college, and talked of as likely to take high honours.

It had always been intended that Marion should spend two months of that autumn at Westport, but just as the time was fixed for her coming the scarlet fever broke out in her uncle's house, and though it proved to be of the mildest kind, they did not think it advisable that she should be exposed to it.

On recovering, the girls were taken out for change of air, and did not return till so late in the year that the visit was deferred till the spring.

Marion often saw her brother, and kept up a frequent correspondence with him, as well as with her cousin Elizabeth ; for, despite the great difference in their characters, the two cousins felt a considerable affection for each other. Elizabeth's letters often contained very life-like descriptions of places she had seen and conversations she had held ; but after a while Marion observed that a certain Mr. Bishop often figured in them, being introduced at

first as "Mr. Bishop, a friend of papa's," and often afterwards appearing in Elizabeth's letter as "Mr. Bishop came in to take a walk," or, "I was saying to Mr. Bishop."—"I wonder who this Mr. Bishop is," thought Marion; "I think I shall ask, for Elizabeth would scarcely mention him so often if she did not mean to provoke inquiry." She accordingly did so, and Elizabeth's next letter contained the following postscript:—

"P.S. What do you think I did with your last letter? It was so entertaining, that I read it aloud to Mr. Bishop. He was excessively amused at your inquiring about him. I hope you will see him soon, and like him for my sake, Marion. He really is a very agreeable young man, and a great deal too good for me. He is sitting opposite now, and very impatient for me to have done. He sends his kind regards. The next time I write I will give you a description of him."

"What a very odd way of telling me that she is engaged," thought Marion; and a few days after came a letter from Mrs. Paton, containing a formal announcement of Elizabeth's engagement "to a very worthy young man, whose father is a great friend of your uncle's. He is not so decidedly serious as we could wish." The letter went on to say:—"But he has been piously brought up, and, as well as our own dear child, seems very attentive to his religious duties; and he and Elizabeth are sincerely attached to each other."

Marion accordingly wrote to congratulate her cousin; and from that time, though Elizabeth's letters were as affectionate as ever, there was a certain coldness and restraint in her manner of speaking on religious matters which she had never manifested before; and after a while such a shrinking from them altogether, that her letters, though very amusing, gave Marion on the whole more pain than pleasure. Marion sometimes asked questions about the various charities and Societies of which Elizabeth had hitherto written in such glowing terms, and in whose cause she had been so active, often concluding her letters by wondering how her cousin *could* live in such an out-of-the-way place as Swanstead, where she scarcely ever either saw or heard anything of the "religious world."

The questions asked by Marion she passed over in a very off-hand manner:—"As for the industrial school that you ask about, I don't think one would answer in your village; but I really have had no time to visit it lately, so I know very little about it. I ride a good deal on horseback now. Fred Bishop says he thinks my health requires it." Or, "I forgot to mention that it rained at the time of the last Church Missionary Meeting; and Fred Bishop says I ought never to go out in the rain." Or, "I rather wonder you should have admired that book; it seemed to me uncommonly dull,—quite what Frederick would call a 'Sunday-book.'"

CHAPTER VII.

GENEROUS REGRETS.

MARION did not mention to Mr. Raeburn the change she had observed in Elizabeth's letters ; and, in thinking them over, tried to believe that Elizabeth being now engaged, might, without impropriety, withdraw a little from those plans of usefulness in which she had hitherto taken so much pleasure. If she had ceased to write, or had written short, uninteresting letters, Marion could easily have referred it to the new tie which had sprung up to occupy her mind. But this was not the case ; Elizabeth's letters were as frequent, and longer than ever, and sometimes contained a kind of apology to Marion for entering so much into her own affairs, such as —“ You will excuse my telling all this to you, but I have no other *young* friend to consult, and it is very natural that I should wish to make a confidant of some one. Besides, you know, dearest Marion, that though Dora and I have always been most affectionate sisters, we have not many ideas in common ; and lately Dora has withdrawn herself so

much among her own friends, that she scarcely has time for any conversations with me. And as we grow older, our opinions getting more unlike, I assure you we often sit nearly silent to avoid discussion and argument, which are things I never could bear."

On the other hand, as Elizabeth seemed inclined to drop the subject of religion altogether, Dora as suddenly began to take it up; and Marion, who liked to write about what most interested her, was very well pleased to have it so.

In a former chapter mention was made of Mrs. Ferguson, a sister of Mrs. Paton's. That lady, who had no children, had been left a widow early in life, and had married a few years back a widower, with one daughter; this young lady, who was about Dora's age, was clever and sensible, and had a great deal of enthusiasm in her character; she and Dora had formed a strict friendship, of which many proofs were perceptible in the letters of the latter, who constantly spoke of her dearest Helen in terms of the most high-flown panegyric, blessing the day when her father came into the neighbourhood, and speaking of the religious knowledge she had acquired, and the light which had broken in upon her from reading the books she had recommended. Marion was greatly surprised at all this, particularly as Dora began to mingle her self-gratulations on the possession of such a friend with lamentations over the state of the town and the

carelessness of the clergy on many important points, mingling the whole with certain expressions, over which Marion could scarcely help laughing. She had not thought it right to go to the Horticultural Exhibition because it had been held on a Friday, and she and Helen always went on that day to the church of the blessed St. Bernard. At another time Dora was shocked to find that Mr. King had fixed the 30th of January for the annual dinner to the Bluecoat-children; she hoped it was not an intentional insult to the memory of "our martyred King." She and Helen were making a collection for an altar-screen for the church of St. Bernard, but she was sorry to say, people did not treat the matter with the seriousness it deserved.


Elizabeth's letter of the same date contained the following sentence, which stood next to the information that Fred Bishop's father had given her a set of garnets:—"Young King is just ordained, and is now acting as his father's curate instead of Mr. Dreux, and a very poor substitute he makes, I assure you. We ought to be very thankful that we can still hear Mr. Dreux sometimes; for the Rector of Pelham's Church, who is extremely aged, has induced him to become his curate, since which the poor old gentleman has become quite bed-ridden, and Mr. Dreux has the complete control of everything, far more than the Rector ever had. The church is the largest and finest in the town, excepting St. Bernard's, and what with Mr. Dreux's

popularity and his fortune, he carries everything before him more completely than ever."

"Mr. Dreux seems to be the only person about whom Elizabeth has not changed her mind," thought Marion, folding up the letter; "she still evidently thinks him 'quite a paragon.'"

By and by Dora's letters began to contain various panegyrics on a certain Mr. Allerton, who had lately been presented to the living of St. Bernard's, on the demise of a clergyman of opposite sentiments. He was doing an extraordinary amount of good, according to Dora's account; but many of the people had left his church, because they did not approve of his opinions, and had chosen to go and hear Mr. Dreux instead, which had occasioned a breach between him and Mr. Allerton, the latter of whom had preached a masterly sermon to Churchmen, on the danger and presumption of leaving their parish church. This sermon he printed, and as people thought it alluded pretty strongly to Mr. Dreux's conduct in taking no notice of the sin of the fugitives, they were greatly disappointed to find that he did not seem disposed to answer it.

In fact, Mr. Dreux not only never answered the said sermon, but he appeared quite unconscious that it was directed against him, and for anything the author knew might have never read it; for upon his sending him a copy, with "the author's compliments" on the cover, he received a note the same evening, which ran as follows:—



"DEAR SIR,

"I beg to thank you for a pamphlet bearing your name, which I found on my table this afternoon. I have not yet had time to open it.

"Believe me, dear Sir,

"Yours faithfully,

"ARTHUR C. DREUX."

Whether Mr. Dreux *ever* found time to open the said pamphlet, or whether he found it unanswerable, or whether he did not choose to take any notice of it, were matters which the Rector of St. Bernard's could not ascertain; but the public observed that he did not alter the manner of his bow, by lifting his hat one iota more or less, when he met his opponent in the street; neither did he bear in his face the slightest expression of consciousness, confusion, or offended pride. But the Rector of St. Bernard's having made up his mind that, if once he could draw his rival into argument, he should certainly get the better of him, was not likely to let the matter rest; accordingly, having waited a reasonable time, and no "Strictures on a Sermon delivered at St. Bernard's, &c.," appearing, he began to offer remarks on Mr. Dreux's speeches at Public Meetings, sometimes in the most gentlemanlike manner requesting him to repeat some expressed opinion or sentiment; or, with an excess of candour, declining to put their full meaning "on the last remarks of his Reverend brother," as

scarcely thinking he meant them to bear a construction involving sentiments so novel.

Mr. Dreux had a calm temper, and used to let him go on and finish his speech, then get up, and, appearing to suppose that Mr. Allerton had really mistaken his meaning, quietly repeat his first sentence, and, declaring that it quite expressed his real opinion, would add a few reasons for supporting it, and sit down, as if he had not the least idea that anything like controversy could have been intended.

All this afforded great amusement to the gossips of Westport, who sincerely hoped something would come of it, and liked to see Mr. Allerton's handsome face flush with annoyance at the impossibility of getting his rival to come out and give him battle.

Mr. Allerton never attempted to try his power with any of the other clergy of Westport; indeed, being a man of unquestionable talent, and Rector of the church, which, from its beauty and position, was always called the Cathedral of Westport, he probably felt that his influence was already greater than theirs. But Mr. Dreux, a man about his own age, his undoubted equal in talent, and one with whom he could not but be sensible that he was constantly being compared, sometimes to the disadvantage of one, and sometimes of the other,—it was most natural that he should wish to try his strength with *him*, particularly as he firmly

believed himself to be in the right; and moreover, as Mr. Dreux was only a curate, he often teased himself by thinking it was particularly annoying to find that he possessed (quite unconsciously to himself) more influence in that parish than the Rector himself could boast of.

In the meantime, having tried several slight engines of attack without avail, he began to feel considerable resentment against the influence possessed by the Curate of Pelham's Church, and, by degrees, suffered his naturally generous mind to look on him solely in the invidious light of a rival. But Mr. Dreux, who was in reality keenly conscious of his feelings towards him, took especial care not to afford him the slightest real ground for finding fault with his proceedings; and it was observed of the two champions, that from month to month their opinions seemed steadily to become more and more contrary,—Mr. Allerton supporting his tenets more steadily as he got settled in the parish and found the people could bear it, Mr. Dreux becoming more distinctly Evangelical in his preaching as the consequences of his rival's teaching unfolded themselves.

Notwithstanding this constant opposition, there was something too noble and honourable in the character of each to admit of any *petty* manifestations of hostility; only on one point the Rector of St. Bernard's had decidedly the worst of it. He was of a very hasty, passionate temperament, and

his rival was equally remarkable for his great command of temper.

Matters were in this state, when an aged lady died, leaving a sum of money for building certain schools in Mr. Dreux's parish. A Public Meeting was called to consider the locality in which they should be built, it having been thought advisable to erect them on a waste piece of land belonging to the Corporation. This plan was acceded to. The next Resolution proposed, that as there was not room at the parish church for the scholars, they should attend St. Bernard's. In consideration of this the parish of St. Bernard's was to have forty children educated in these schools.

As might have been expected, the pastors of both these churches were annoyed at the arrangement. Mr. Allerton, because it would leave his children under the absolute dominion of his rival the whole week ; Mr. Dreux, because it would withdraw *his* on all occasions of public worship. But neither liked to say anything, though the dissatisfaction of one at least was obvious to the whole assembly.

It did not, therefore, excite much surprise when, after the business of the Meeting was concluded, Mr. Dreux came forward to propose an Amendment to one of the Resolutions, which was no other than a proposition on his part to provide proper accommodation in his own church for the scholars, which (after remarking that he did not wish to include

the forty extra-parochial children unless agreeable to their own minister) he easily showed could be done, as he himself would provide the funds, and the additional seats would not at all disfigure the church. This arrangement, he contended, would be far more convenient than sending the children to a church at a considerable distance from the school-rooms. "And I think," he continued, turning towards the Rector of St. Bernard's with a courteous smile, "that however much my colleague and myself may occasionally differ, I shall be sure of his concurrence in a plan which will enable these young Church people to attend their parish church."

Mr. Allerton, who had intended to express his willingness to receive the children, looked up, and felt himself completely foiled, and that with his own weapons. He felt the colour mount to his temples, but to object was impossible. Through the obnoxious sermon he had given his rival an opportunity to gain a great advantage over him, and at the same time to show that he was not in the least afraid of alluding to it, though he did not seem to think it worthy of an answer.

The tact with which Mr. Dreux followed up this slight advantage was a considerable annoyance to the Rector of St. Bernard's, who now felt that he must either waive his claim to the education of his forty children, or leave them wholly under the influence of the former,—for the middle course he could not reconcile to his mind. He therefore chose to

waive his claim, and set to work to build such an addition to his own parish schools as would accommodate forty extra children.

Things continued in this state till the first anniversary of his coming, when it appeared that his opinions had already gained so much ground as to have become constant matter of discussion and comparison.

Religion and its profession had long been the fashion at Westport; it was now taken up by a new set of people, who attended all his services, and adopted many of the practices he recommended. At first sight the duties imposed by Mr. Allerton on those of his people who desired, as he phrased it, to be "true sons of our holy mother the Church," were rather of an onerous kind; yet it appeared that to many they were a welcome relief after the requisitions of the other party. Moreover, they were of a *certain tangible* nature, and having been all duly attended to, enabled the performer to say, "I have repeated my prayers, gone through my devotional reading, attended service, given alms, &c., therefore I am a good Christian,"—or rather, a good Churchman; for Mr. Allerton taught much more of the Church than about the Head of the Church.

There were in Westport, as in most country towns, a great number of single ladies. Many of these made a Christian profession, and from the leisure they possessed, and their willingness to

devote it to the service of God, were looked upon by the clergy as their natural allies. In almost every parish there were several of these ladies, more or less active. Among others, there were three sisters of the name of Silverstone, who lived in Mr. Dreux's parish, and managed most of his charities for him,—that gentleman having been heard to say that three old maids were as good as a curate.

It may be greatly doubted whether this assertion holds good in general; but the three Miss Silverstones were no ordinary old maids, and were always treated with all possible consideration by Mr. Dreux, though he did bestow on them the aforesaid disrespectful appellation.

These three sisters lived in a good old-fashioned house near the church, but owing to the circumstance that their deceased father had been a linen-draper, they were not visited by the "*élite*" of the town, though it was admitted that they were, without doubt, among the excellent of the earth. They were all past sixty, and two of them still extremely active. The second, Miss Dorothy, was slightly deformed, but her countenance retained, despite the invariable expression which marks the faces of persons so afflicted, a peculiar sweetness. This old lady was Mr. Dreux's favourite, and was so highly esteemed by him that it was said he never undertook anything of importance without consulting her.

She was as useful in her quiet way as her two sisters in their more active path.

Miss Dorothy Silverstone used to go in and out of Mr. Dreux's house whenever she liked, and was far more at home in it than any other lady, whether old or young ; besides which, he paid her great attention, and humoured her fancies, which was considered an amiable weakness by some other ladies, who decided that *they* never could see anything so particularly heavenly about old Miss Dorothy ; while others remarked how excessively chary he was of his attentions to young ladies, and thought that at any rate *she* could not possibly mistake them, and wondered whether she had any chance of becoming Mrs. Arthur Dreux, the wife of the most popular and admired man in the town.

Besides these ladies, there was another set, who had always professed themselves "very fond of religion and all that sort of thing," and who yet contrived to enjoy such of the pleasures of the world as were within their reach, in connexion with this sort of half profession. These were among the first to declare themselves "greatly edified by dear Mr. Allerton's excellent discourses," in proof of which edification they always abstained from giving tea-parties on Fridays—took care to attend service on every saint's day—talked about the Anglican branch of the holy Catholic Church—wore slight mourning during Lent—spoke of the

Reformation with a shake of the head—talked with rapture of the ancient custom of confession, and hoped that “privilege would soon be restored to us.”

These ladies caricatured all Mr. Allerton's opinions, and caused him infinite vexation. They were a set of retainers whom he would fain have been rid of. They had a book club of their own—most of the books had decorated margins; and to hear some of them talk, one might have been led to suppose that they conceived the distinction between them and their late friends, the Evangelical party, to lie chiefly in some such trivial peculiarities as dress, form, and fashion. They had never troubled themselves much with the doctrines of either party; consequently, when they apparently came over to Mr. Allerton's side, they had no better way of deciding to “which set” a clergyman belonged than by observing whether he preached in his black gown; and of certain people they would affirm that it was impossible they could be High Church, because they had no fish on a Friday.

It is not to be supposed that in Dora's letters to Marion she gave any such account as is here presented to our readers; it was only incidentally that she became aware of the very great change in the aspect of affairs, and the corresponding change in her cousin's views. There was no hint of the disputes, separations, and heart-burnings which had divided people, till Elizabeth, happening to mention

that Mr. Allerton had got a curate of the same sentiments as himself, went on to say: "Mr. Dreux has had a severe illness, and people do not scruple to say that it was occasioned by over-exertion and anxiety of mind. We are all very sorry about it. Mr. Dreux is not now nearly so exclusive as he used to be, and is far more kind in his general manners. He was always very handsome," proceeded Elizabeth, lapsing into the old theme, "and since his illness he looks more so than ever; but Dora will not allow that he is to be compared with Mr. Allerton; and as for the new curate, she and Helen make themselves quite ridiculous about him; but he goes such lengths that mamma will not allow Dora to go to that church any more; in fact, she has long disapproved of it, but Dora spends so much of her time with Helen that it could scarcely be prevented hitherto. The new curate is really more than half a Roman Catholic, and has given great offence to some of Mr. Allerton's people. Mamma was lamenting the other day to Mr. Dreux the divided state of the town, and the dissensions these new doctrines have caused, and he actually said that he did not think it so particularly to be regretted. He thought it would ultimately do more good than harm, for there were many things we might copy from them with great advantage, he thought; and if controversy did no other good, it would at least oblige people to look into and investigate the truths they contended for; and he

believed there were many people here who could not give a reasonable account 'of the hope that was in them.'"

Mr. Dreux's illness was of so serious a nature as for a few days to place his life in the utmost peril ; and when all danger was over it was some time before he recovered his health and strength.

When it was supposed that he would not recover, the strength of affection which really existed for him began to be touchingly manifested, especially by the poor, and his door was daily and hourly besieged by inquirers after the last report of his physician.

Mr. Dreux had been very much over-tasked lately, having had not only that whole parish on his hands, but also the management of what had now become the open controversy between his own party and the growing one of his rival. The new curate had not shown himself so moderate as his rector, and his attacks had been so persevering and his charges so grave, that it was thought advisable they should be answered. All this fell upon Mr. Dreux, who had the treble duty of declaring what doctrines he did hold, defending them from the charge of being unscriptural, and showing that they were in accordance with the formularies of the Church,—no easy task, particularly with so keen an antagonist as Mr. Hewly, the new curate. There is no doubt that the harass attending this contention was very great; and when he fell ill

there were not wanting those who said they hoped Mr. Allerton would take it to himself, for he alone was to blame for it. They had peace and quiet before he set his foot among them, "and there had been nothing but dissension since."

Mr. Allerton, though he had not gone such lengths as his curate, had not in any way discouraged him; on the contrary, he had felt pleased to find some one who was willing to set to work more decidedly than he liked to do himself,—for he was a thorough gentleman, and had no idea of taking unfair advantage. His curate was troubled with no such scruples. Mr. Allerton, nevertheless, could not help feeling from the day of his arrival he had never omitted an opportunity of harassing his rival. He had persuaded himself to think of him as such. His whole influence had been directed towards undermining his power, destroying his popularity, and throwing contempt upon his principles. One of his greatest hopes had been that something might occur to remove this obnoxious member of society away from the town, but nothing was further from them than that death should effect the removal, and that death be laid to his door.

Such being the case, he was shocked one morning when he went to inquire after him to be told that there was scarcely any hope of his recovery, and he went home feeling as wretched as if the dying man had accused him of being his murderer, and wishing a thousand times that he could recal what he had

written and said against him. He was naturally an amiable man, and in spite of his constant opposition, he had really felt a considerable respect for his rival, and, strange as it may seem, a kind of admiration for his eloquence and pride in his talents. It was something to have "a foeman worthy of his steel;" and he would have been mortified if Mr. Dreux had come short of the estimate he had formed of him—for then where would have been the glory of his hoped-for victory?

Apart from their religious differences, there were many grounds of sympathy between them. They were both young, talented, popular, energetic. And as Mr. Allerton walked back to his own house, and recalled their intercourse from the first, and remembered how needlessly and vexatiously he had opposed him, he shrunk from the review of his own conduct, and the many provocations he had given him, and which he had tried to make most suited to chafe his lofty spirit. On the other hand, he only remembered a few hasty expressions of momentary vexation and irritation; and he believed he would give all he possessed to recal the past.

As he sat alone in his study, he made a solemn resolution, that if ever Mr. Dreux recovered, he would ask his forgiveness, and solicit his friendship; but in the meantime he inquired at his house many days before the answer was such as to give him much hope that he should ever see him again. And as anxiety began to tell upon his appearance, and

make him look pale and haggard, people ungenerously commented upon it. "Ah, now he sees what he has done; he begins to be afraid. Ah, he'll never have an opportunity of doing poor Mr. Dreux an unkindness again."

However, after causing the utmost anxiety to his friends for ten days, the unconscious subject of all these remarks began to recover, and in another ten days was able to leave his room for the welcome change of his library sofa.

Mrs. Dorothy Silverstone, who had nursed him through this illness with the tenderness of a mother, was almost overcome with joy when she saw him again in his favourite room; and when she had drawn the curtain half-way across the window, so as to cast a slight glow on his face, she pleased herself with thinking that he did not look quite so pale as might have been expected.

Mothers and nurses are agreed that grown-up sons are far more difficult to nurse than grown-up daughters,—the former generally exhibiting a refractory disposition when they begin to recover, speaking disrespectfully of medicines and doctors, and contemning their aliment, which they designate "slops." Mr. Dreux, though an easy man to nurse on the whole, according to Mrs. Dorothy Silverstone's account, was not exempt from this infirmity incidental to mankind; and he showed it very strongly when he found that he had escaped from his bed-room, and was once more in the room with

his books, for he had not been many minutes lying there before he requested his watchful friend to bring him a certain heavy volume which he pointed out. This the old lady declined to do, remarking that he could not hold it if he had it, and requesting him to try to sleep; upon which he said if he might not read, he wished she would bring him a pen, for he should like to amuse himself by writing a little. Mrs. Dorothy elevated her eye-brows, but finding that he really was in earnest, she brought him a pen and propped up his head with pillows, while he tried to use it; but finding that his hand shook, so as to make the writing quite illegible, the invalid gave it up, as he said, "till the afternoon," and fell asleep, previously throwing out a hint of going down the garden to-morrow if it was fine.

Waking up after an hour's refreshing sleep, he amused himself for a little while by observing the stripes in Mrs. Dorothy's knitting, and counting the colours; then he watched the gardener, who was potting out some plants into the borders; at last he bethought himself of having something to eat, as a passable way of spending the time.

"Yes, that you shall, Mr. Dreux," said his nurse, "and glad I am to hear you ask for it." So saying, she trotted to a table, and brought him a beautiful bunch of grapes and a biscuit. "These grapes came from Mr. Allerton's greenhouse," she said, as she arranged the pillows; "he sent them this morning."

"Very kind of him," returned the invalid. "I should not know they were not the same as I have had all through my illness."

"They are the same," replied the old lady. "Mr. Allerton often sends them, and he constantly inquires after you."

"I will see him to-morrow if he calls," said Mr. Dreux.

"The day after," suggested Mrs. Dorothy, by way of amendment; and he submitted quite peaceably, for he knew that, as he could scarcely walk alone, he was quite at the mercy of any old lady who might choose to take him in hand.

It was, however, several days before his physician gave him leave to see his friends, and after that, Mr. Allerton happening to be one of the first persons who called, was shown into the library, where he found him lying on the sofa, alone, and forgetting for the moment that his change of feeling could only be known to himself, addressed him with a warmth of friendliness which evidently astonished Mr. Dreux, who had certainly been pleased at his kindness in so constantly inquiring after his health, (though it was no more than he would have done himself if their circumstances had been reversed,) and expected nothing less than to see him come in with a face of the utmost solicitude, and address him with as much interest as if he had always been the object of his warmest regard.

Though much better, and perfectly capable of

entering into conversation, he was still very weak ; and happening to turn towards the light, his guest was betrayed into an exclamation of regret at his altered appearance. The slight flush of surprise that passed over his face on hearing it, instantly reminded Mr. Allerton that there was no reason to suppose his own change of feeling would find a corresponding change in the mind of his late antagonist. Being a man of very quick feelings, he was nevertheless hurt to see that his unexpected manner had flurried him, and felt as if he had been intentionally repelled, when he, after thanking him for his kindness, and answering his inquiries after his health, turned the conversation again to the most ordinary topics, half afraid lest anything of nearer interest might lead to a discussion.

Mr. Dreux had indeed felt a sensation of wonder at the expressions of regard, almost amounting to affection, with which his new friend had commenced ; but his own perceptions being extremely keen, he saw that this involuntary feeling had given pain. He accordingly attempted to assume an answering tone of voice, and seem unconscious of anything unusual. But Mr. Allerton could not recover from the first check, and after several topics of conversation had been tried without the possibility of dragging it on any further, he stopped short, with his arms folded, and various painful emotions working in his face ; and his host, almost as uncomfort-

able as himself, lay still, looking at him, and wondering what was to come next.

It was very obvious that something unusual must have happened since they had last met ; and as he lay watching the pained expression of Mr. Allerton's face, who sat with his lips set, intently gazing out of the window, and a flush overspreading his features, which completed the contrast between them, he began to be troubled with one of those uncertainties which often beset the minds of those newly recovered from fever. He wondered for an instant whether there really had been any differences between them then, as some of the bitter expressions in his last pamphlet occurred to him : he next wondered whether this man, who now sat before him with so much suppressed feeling visible in his every glance, had not come to his bedside, or at least seen him since they parted at variance, and held out his hand to him, hoping they might be friends. He could not be certain that he had not, and if so, how cold and restrained he must think his present conduct.

He knew that in his restless hours of fever he had often mentioned Mr. Allerton's name ; he had fancied himself compelled to hold long, weary arguments with him, and in his delirium had entreated him to desist ; but he did *not* know that this trivial circumstance was perfectly well known to his late rival, and at that moment was present to his mind.

When this fancy passed away, he was certain he

had not seen him in any other way than as an uncompromising antagonist ; and with feverish anxiety he began to consider whether some misfortune might not have happened to him during his illness, and that Allerton was come to tell him of it ; and accordingly he watched his countenance with an intensity of attention which must surely have forestalled his evil tidings, had any such existed.

At length, with a short, quick sigh, Allerton changed his position, and looked him full in the face.

His expression of anxious interest could not be mistaken, but there was an appeal in his eyes which his late rival scarcely knew how to answer, though he thought he knew its meaning ; but raising himself up, and holding out his hand, said, with a cordial smile, " Pray do not be uneasy about me, I am much better."

Mr. Allerton took the offered hand, with a painful perception of how white and thin it was ; but this only added to the troubled look of his face, which struck upon the sharpened senses of the invalid, who said hurriedly, " Or if you know that I am not better, if you have been charged with any message from my physician, speak it ; I am not afraid to hear. Not that ? Then my sister is ill."

" No, no ; nothing of the kind," cried Allerton, starting up, really alarmed. " I am charged with no message ; I have nothing of consequence to say,—of the least consequence to you I mean."


The invalid, sitting upright, had seized his arm,

as if to prevent his going away before answering his question. Now, without appearing reassured, he sunk back exhausted on the pillows, but did not let go his hold, saying faintly, "Whatever it is I must hear it now, something must be the matter. If it is of consequence to any one in whom I feel an interest, it must be of consequence to me."

"What have I done?" thought Allerton, now doubly disturbed. "I do beg, I entreat you, to be calm; it was only about myself that I wished to speak to you—only myself I do assure you."

Dreux was satisfied, and made a violent effort to recover his outward appearance of calmness, but his nerves being weakened by illness, required a longer time than he was inclined to give; and the veins in his temple throbbed wildly, while his guest continued to beseech him to think nothing of his inconsiderate awkwardness, and in a tone of bitterness against himself, said, "The matter is, that I have been making myself miserable during your illness, with the remembrance of how much I have harassed you in your work. I know what your people think. I am afraid I am partly to blame for this illness."

"Pray do not say any more," returned the invalid, holding out his hand and attempting to stop him, "I am grieved that such an idea should have suggested itself to your mind: do not let it disturb you for a moment. I have never thought that I had anything to complain of."



"Not of defeat, certainly," replied the Rector of St. Bernard's; "but," he added with a sigh, "though controversy was inevitable, though I could not endeavour to spread my own opinions without opposing yours, I have wished very much lately that I had done it in a different way. I have said and done many things, which on reflection have given me great pain." He said this with such deliberate earnestness, that it was impossible to check him, and concluded by frankly acknowledging that his late rival's friendship was a thing that he greatly coveted. This was tendered at once with the greatest cordiality.

"And I earnestly hope the day may come when we shall both think alike," continued Mr. Allerton.

"So do I," was the answer, "most heartily desire it. I shall make it one of the subjects of my prayers."


Allerton rather winced at this, as if horrified at the supposition that a change on *his* part could be thought possible. Nevertheless, being strongly drawn towards his late antagonist, he forbore to express the contempt he felt for his tenets; and perceiving that he had now quite got over his late excitement, contented himself by saying, "And as for these pamphlets, which I heartily wish had never seen the light, I hope you will consent to discontinue them. I am sorry I ever tried to unsettle the minds of *your* people; and if we could in a friendly way discuss our points

of difference, I have great hopes that—in short, I mean to say, that if you would investigate these matters—you would soon come over yourself to the right—I mean to the other side, and prove a far better advocate for it than I can ever hope to be.”

He had spoken earnestly, and leaning forward, heard the subject of these good wishes say, in a very low voice, “God forbid.”

“Respecting these pamphlets,” he presently said, “you have nothing to answer for them, your curate and I must manage them as well as we can. In my opinion he has not conducted them in the most gentleman-like manner possible, but that we neither of us have anything to do with. I must write one in answer to his last attack, or people will think there is nothing to be said on the other side.”

Mr. Allerton was apparently examining the hearth-rug during these remarks, but from the involuntary confusion he betrayed, it became evident that he must have had more to do with these pamphlets than his rival had been led to suppose; but being anxious not to disturb their newborn friendship, the latter concealed the discovery, and went on in the same tone. “I shall be glad if he will be prevailed upon to drop this mode of warfare, for I always disliked controversy. Not that I complain of his statements, for I have had a fair opportunity of answering them, and I sincerely



believe that the cause I advocate has been rather advantaged than otherwise; for several matters have been brought into notice on both sides, opinions about which people have been compelled to *think*, to choose, and distinguish for themselves, *which* they will call *truth* and which *error*. For as this controversy has touched upon the very vitals of religion, and we take opposite sides, I need make no difficulty in taking for granted that one of us must be utterly in error. As for the manner in which Hewly has conducted his side, I do not wish to complain of it. No doubt it is difficult to keep one's temper. I am afraid I shall lose mine altogether, if this goes on much longer; in fact," he added, with a sigh of excitement and fatigue, "it makes my head ache to think of it."

"Yes, yes," returned his guest, perceiving that in his weak state the very mention of argument and mental labour of any kind was a trouble, "these things shall be arranged as you please. I ought to have known better than to have talked of them."

He then altered the cushions, partially darkened the room, and brought some refreshments from the table, expressing considerable anxiety lest his new friend might have over-excited himself, and would have taken his leave but for an urgent request that he would remain another half-hour.

"I am afraid of fatiguing you," he replied; "you are not able to bear the least exertion."

"Anything is better for me than being left

alone," urged the invalid. "I am not able to read, and cannot prevent my mind from wearying itself with all manner of abstruse speculations—little trivial things disturb me. The church bells agitated me beyond expression this morning when they chimed; and if you can credit anything so absurd, I have been annoyed all the morning by those two pictures opposite, because they hang awry."

"That source of annoyance at least may be spared you. I shall take upon myself to alter them. What is this beautiful village church—is it a fancy picture? What a spire! and what fine cedars!"

"I have not seen the original since my boyhood, but this view scarcely does it justice. It is Swanstead Church."

"Has it any particular interest for you beyond its beauty?"

"It may probably have the deepest interest, if I am spared to middle life; the living is in the gift of my uncle, Colonel Norland."

"The east window is very fine," remarked the Rector of St. Bernard's, who was an enthusiast on the subject of church architecture. He then went on to describe some alterations then in progress in his own church. But before taking his leave, he said, with some hesitation, "I do not know what you will think of me, after hearing what I am about to acknowledge; but I really cannot take my departure without admitting that

I am myself responsible for the greater part of those pamphlets. I do not mean to say," he hastily explained, "that *I* wrote any of those odious personalities. I despise such modes of attack, and did what I could to dissuade Hewly from them; but I sketched out *all* the rest for him, and you best know how bitter it is. Nevertheless, I do not choose that you should remain ignorant of this, still less that any one else should tell it you."

"You are perfectly right to defend your cause to the utmost," returned Mr. Dreux, who seemed lost in thought.

"You are not offended?"

"O no."

"But I see very plainly that you never expected a covert attack from me."

"I am quite sure that I need never expect another," was the answer, given with a smile.

Still it was evident that he had formed in his own mind a higher estimate of his opponent's character than the result seemed to justify.

Allerton felt mortified, but answered calmly, "The only thing I wish to urge on your consideration is, that your views had had time to gain ground; I was, therefore, so far at a disadvantage. Still I *am* sorry that I should have drawn so many of your people away."

"I said before," was the reply, given however with the greatest gentleness, "that I can scarcely think so much harm has been done to the side

I advocate, as you seem to consider. Indeed, I must tell you plainly that I do not believe one person, who was a true convert to the doctrines which we call Evangelical, has been induced to leave us and go to you. I do *not* believe it," he repeated, seeing the incredulous look directed to him. "I do not deny that the proceedings of the past year have made my path far less easy, but it has shown who really were for us, which before we could not know. The scheme of salvation as set forth by you and by us is a totally different thing. We declare that faith, having been vouchsafed by God, the sinner no sooner exercises it than he becomes completely justified. And that, according to the promise, 'whom he justified, them he also sanctified,'—the work of sanctification by the Holy Spirit then begins. This is directly opposed to your belief, which sets sanctification first, and when it has reached a certain point, admits that the sinner becomes justified.

"You also deny that change of heart which we call conversion, and declare to be essential. I do not say this to remind you how widely we stand apart, but to account to you for my firm belief, that no person who has experienced this conversion—who had been taught the impossibility of doing anything himself to forward his own salvation, taught the deadly nature of sin and the fulness of Christ, a knowledge which can only be imparted by the Spirit of truth—would ever be permitted by

that same Spirit permanently to decline back upon the belief in any other scheme of salvation, and turn his back (for ever) upon the Lord who bought him, acknowledging that any outward sign or sacrament, or any holiness of his own, could save him."

"Go on," replied Allerton, whose penetrating eyes seemed as if they would search his very soul. "I will bear you out in some of your assertions, strong though they be. If one of us is right, how great must be the error of the other! If one is a true son of the Church, the other is scarcely worthy of the name. The only thing for each to consider is, which that one may be. And I hope," he continued, reflecting for an instant how strongly they had both spoken, "that you will permit me in future to call you my friend, and that we shall be able to preserve a personal regard for each other without any compromise of principle."

As might have been expected, he met with a cordial response to this, and took his leave, pleased on the whole with the interview; though the momentary change which had passed over Mr. Dreux's face when he acknowledged how much he had written of the pamphlets, rankled in his mind and subdued in some degree the peculiar regard he felt for him.

"He has the advantage of me in everything," he reflected, as he walked down the broad pavements of the streets leading to his rectory. "His temper is not half so warm as mine, and he does not so

easily forget himself. I must get him to drop this pamphleteering,—but that new one, which he has not yet seen, what will he think of it? He *must* answer it. I hope I shall not be provoked into a rejoinder. Well! I would go great lengths to get him for an ally, but I suspect his principles have taken deep root. I went great lengths to-day, and I do not think he met me half way. I would not have endured that last speech of his if he had not looked so ill, and if I had not remembered what I have suffered the last three weeks. I am afraid my popularity will decline if we become friends. Nothing but this rivalry keeps us equal. I suspect he is more than a match for me. However, I have done this thing with my eyes open and of my own free will. If he has one spark of generosity he will be very careful now not to do me more harm than he can help; and, for the rest, perhaps the Vicar of Swanstead (whoever he is) may obligingly die, and so help me out of the difficulty.”

A few days after this he called again on Mr. Dreux, and found him astonishingly better, and sitting at a table, with a paper-knife in his hand, which he was using on the pages of a new pamphlet, reading a piece here and there as he went on. He was beginning to look like himself again, and came forward with a most cordial smile to meet his visitor.

“So, I see you are commencing work again,” said the Rector of St. Bernard’s.

"Yes; but at present I am not equal to much exertion. I believe, however," laying his hand on the pamphlet, "that I must answer this. I have been looking it over, and fancy I can trace more of *your* style than usual in it."

"I did assist a good deal with it," was the reply. "I hope it does not offend you?"

"By no means. I think it fairly written, and not so difficult to answer as some of your former ones."

"Indeed! Well, whatever the answer may be, I will keep in mind that I began this contention; and I hope it will leave our newly-formed friendship unimpaired."

"What makes you doubt that? Is it the recollection of those words—'how shall two walk together except they be agreed?'"

"No; for our walking together may lead to our becoming agreed, which is 'a consummation devoutly to be wished.'"

"Not more by you than by me; but I will tell you what I am much afraid will prevent any close friendship between us, if no such change takes place. I am afraid our people, if they see us acting together,—seeking each other's society, and by constant communication sanctioning, in *appearance* at least, each other's proceedings,—may come to think that we consider the differences between us trivial and of no account,—that we think one set of opinions as good as another."

"And that I could not permit."

"No, we could not permit our conduct to give ground for such a supposition; and, therefore, my chief hope of anything like a permanent friendship between us is, that, as you have said, by the blessing of God, we may become agreed."

"And yet you seem quite confident that that agreement is to come from no change in your own opinions? Now" (laying his hand upon the arm of his late rival, and laughing) "don't begin again about conversion and all that sort of thing. I never could bear that exclusive doctrine, and yet I suppose you would tell me, that unless I pass through all its supernatural influences we shall never be agreed? No, no; I hope for better things. Why, what does our holy and perfect Church bestow baptism for on her infant members, if they are afterwards to be called upon to be converted, as if they were no better than Heathens?"

Though Mr. Allerton had spoken good-temperedly and as if half in joke, there was a contemptuous tone in his voice, when alluding to the tenets held by his friend, strangely at variance with the regard he expressed for him personally; and Mr. Dreux, as he leaned back in his chair and listened to all this and a great deal more, could scarcely reconcile the two together. He, however, showed both feelings strongly, and at the same time talked of his own plans with most perfect good faith, and made himself completely at home, insisting upon remaining for

the morning to give his help with some accounts belonging to the secretaryship of the Pastoral-Aid Society, which, since Mr. Dreux's illness, had got into some confusion, and which that gentleman had been fretting himself to extricate from their tangled state.

If there is one thing that most clergymen agree to dislike it is accounts; the fraternity have a natural horror of them. And their curious habit of making memoranda on the backs of letters, making notes in pencil on any bit of paper that comes to hand, and then confiding the said paper to any drawer that happens to be open, makes the time for balancing very troublesome; so that when they *come* right (which expression is a most appropriate one) it seems to be by a happy accident, or, as it were, of their own accord.

Mr. Allerton hated accounts, like most of his brethren; nevertheless, he spent no less than two hours over the Society's books, and then, having got them into order, did not scruple to tell his obliged friend, with the most perfect *bon-hommie*, that he considered the Society a horrid Dissenting sort of thing, and it would give him great pleasure to see it knocked on the head!

"Then, how can you reconcile it to your conscience to help it forward so zealously?" was the rejoinder. "Your help has been the same thing as a five-pound note to it, for I should never have

discovered that I had not paid my own subscription if you had not pointed it out to me."

"I wish the Society all manner of misfortunes, notwithstanding," replied the Rector of St. Bernard's, laughing, and buttoning up his coat preparatory to taking his leave; "and among others your speedy withdrawal from it."

"Don't you know the old saw,—'Love me, love my dog?'" inquired Mr. Dreux, calling after him as he was about to shut the door.

"Don't speak so loud, Dreux," said Allerton, putting in his head again, "it's enough to throw you into another fever. With regard to your dog, which you seem to think I ought to pet; I'll act by it as one of the boys in my school did this morning by another. I found two of them had been fighting when I went in, and I insisted that they should shake hands. They were a big boy and a little fellow; so the big boy turned round with his back to me, and just as they shook hands the little fellow burst out crying. 'What's the matter now?' I said, 'you little rascal.' 'O please, Sir,—please, Sir, just as Wylie shook hands with one hand, Sir, he fetched me a back-handed slap with the other.' Now don't laugh, Dreux; it's extremely bad for you. Keep calm." So saying, he shut the door, and left Mr. Dreux to meditate at leisure on his amiable eccentricities.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HEROINE WITHOUT ADMIRERS.

THE Rector of St. Bernard's, partly in consequence of his warm-heartedness, and partly in consequence of his fiery temper, was very much influenced by his friends, and neither acted nor thought for himself half so much as might have been expected from a man of his talents and position.

As long as Mr. Dreux continued to retain the slightest appearance of delicate health he kept himself under strong restraint in his intercourse with him, but this appearance, with God's blessing on an excellent constitution, soon vanished, and then Mr. Allerton began to "come out in his own proper colours."

He was one of those people of whom it is jocularly said that they are always in hot water with somebody. He could not help quarrelling with his dearest friends;—always putting himself in a passion whenever he was thwarted, and apologizing in the most generous manner when his short-lived anger had blown over.

On an average he quarrelled with Mr. Dreux about once a fortnight; sometimes going the length of declaring that he never would speak to him again, at others contenting himself by banging the library-door after him, with a noise that resounded through the whole house.

By the time he had got to the bottom of the stairs, he generally paused to consider; with consideration came regret. By this time Mr. Dreux had followed him to the foot of the stairs, and finding him standing irresolute in the hall, would inquire whether he would like a turn in the garden, and then, without waiting for a reply, take him by the arm, and the two would go out together, Mr. Allerton's passion subsiding as rapidly as the unusual colour from his face; till, after swallowing down the remainder of his wrath, he would interrupt the discourse on indifferent subjects by suddenly breaking out into a violent invective against himself, declaring that he was not fit for civilized society, that his friends must have the patience of fifty Jobs to bear with him, that he did not care in the least about the matter in dispute, and that he now saw he had been perfectly wrong throughout (but this he generally said whether he had been right or wrong), and that he requested forgiveness for his unaccountable behaviour.

With Mr. Dreux he was safe when he made these admissions, as he never suffered him to go further than he thought he would approve when he became

calmer, nor ever took the least advantage of his warmly affectionate disposition; but with Mr. Hewly, his curate and college friend, things were different.

No two men could have been greater contrasts to each other than the rector and curate, and, judging by appearance and manner, no person could have supposed that the former was in bondage to the latter.

Mr. Allerton was a fine man, with a fair complexion, an erect figure, and a face so extremely open and honest, that few strangers, looking into his clear hazel eyes, would have hesitated to confide in him. Generous to a fault, open-hearted, and condemning all meanness, he seemed incapable of believing in such a failing among others, at *least* among educated and respectable people, and often, as he put himself into a passion about some flagrant act of deception in those whom he had befriended, he never inveighed against "the rascals" for cheating him without expressing as much surprise as if it had never happened to him before. As he walked in the streets, with his regular, firm step, and business-like air, his manner said, as plainly as possible, "Good people, I am not afraid to look any of you in the face. I am going about my lawful calling, and I have no doubt you are going about yours."

Mr. Hewly, his curate, was as different a man as

it is possible to imagine. He was about the middle height, extremely slender, had deep-set eyes, very smooth black hair, and used to walk with an air of deep humility, his eyes generally fixed on the ground. He seldom looked any one in the face, spoke in a low, internal voice, and often sighed deeply. He was not by any means without his admirers, but most even of *these* were afraid of him. He generally conveyed his wishes by insinuation, and exercised his influence in an underhand way.

But the most startling novelties in doctrine (and he held many which were such to his flock) he would advance in the calmest manner, as if they had been familiar truths which our Church plainly taught, and which no man in his senses would deny; and if any one expressed astonishment at them, would affect anguish of mind, with indignation, not against the person objecting, but against his or her spiritual guides, who, he said, had much to answer for before God and the Church for their daring impiety in wilfully concealing the truths she taught. And then would follow an exhortation on obedience to the commands of the Church (as expounded by himself, of course), together with various promises as to the safety, comfort, and repose which should attend those who practised such obedience.

With this gentleman Mr. Allerton had formed a

friendship at college, and, when he found himself settled in his living, had written to offer him the curacy.

At first rector and curate got on amicably enough, though Mr. Hewly, even in his friend's opinion, went great lengths; and he sometimes ventured to hint to him that he thought he was drawing uncommonly near Rome.

But Mr. Hewly always replied, that he hoped to see him following in the same path when more light had been vouchsafed to him, and generally contrived to follow his own track by means of the concessions Mr. Allerton made after they had quarrelled.

By this means he got several innovations introduced into that church (and innovations they truly might be called, as it had been built since the Reformation), and set up several customs which his friend reluctantly gave into, though he considered them unnecessary, not to say highly imprudent.

"We shall certainly get into some scrape," said the Rector, going one day into his curate's study, and throwing down a newspaper, which contained a letter full of severe strictures "on the manner in which Divine service is conducted at St. Bernard's."

This letter, after commenting on the changes lately introduced, went on,—“And do the officiating clergymen of this church really mean to tell a congregation of intelligent English people,

that all this bowing and reverence towards the table of the communion,—these senseless imitations of the worship of the corrupt Church of Rome,—have anything in them of the nature of true godliness? Do they mean to impose upon the people this double absurdity?—for what is this but a copy of the priest's bow of reverence to the host, which, in a Catholic church, stands upon the altar? But to bow to an empty communion-table is worse than folly,—it is a pretence of a sin that they cannot commit, when the host (the idol) is not there to be adored!"

"There," exclaimed Mr. Allerton, flinging the paper across to his curate, "see what you have brought upon us! Did not I tell you that your preaching would be quite as effectual without all that—that (he was going to say "mummery," but was checked by his curate's eye),—"and would not arouse half the suspicions?"

Mr. Hewly took up the newspaper, and having doubled it to his mind, read the letter through twice with great deliberation, and scrutinized it so long as tenfold to increase the passionate impatience of his Rector. He then said, quietly folding it up, "I always said that fellow Dreux was a false friend to you, but you never would believe it."

"What has that to do with it?" exclaimed Mr. Allerton, turning short round upon him, fretted almost past bearing by his quiet way of taking the thing, and his daring allusion to Mr. Dreux.

"No more to do with it," pursued Mr. Hewly, "than that this is wonderfully like his style. However, as he is your sworn friend, I suppose nothing must be said against him; but if he does not get us into some scrape or other I am very much mistaken."

Now Mr. Hewly knew perfectly well that the letter was no more like Mr. Dreux's style than it was like the Pope's; but after he had made the above remarks he took up his pen and began to write again, as if his mind was made up on the matter.

"*His* style!" cried Mr. Allerton, snatching up the paper with more than his usual impetuosity;—"if I thought he had written this letter, holding me up to ridicule in an underhand way, I'd never speak to him again as long as I lived."

Mr. Hewly smiled. "You ought to be a good judge of his style, I should think," he said; "he is always writing something or other against you."

"Not against *me*, and not lately, either," interrupted Allerton; for, angry as he was, he perceived the injustice of this remark.

"But I suppose you must like it," Mr. Hewly proceeded, as if he had not heard the interruption; "or at least, you must have changed your opinions since you knew him, for you are always quoting them. He insinuates them so cleverly that you will soon be over on his side if you let him get so completely the upper hand of you. Why, he can

wind you round his finger! And then he pretends to be attached to you! Bah! I hate such dissimulation!"

"Change my opinions! go over to the Evangelicals!" cried Mr. Allerton, "and be ridiculed by him behind my back! No, that I never will. Give me the paper this instant." So saying, he snatched up his hat and posted off to Mr. Dreux's house, boiling over with passion,—the most bitter ingredient in the dose his curate had administered being the insinuation that Dreux only pretended to be attached to him in order to bring him over to *his* side.

In the meantime, Mr. Hewly, well content with his pious fraud, sat awaiting the result full of hope that his Rector, being far too angry to explain himself, would begin his interview with such an outbreak of invective as Mr. Dreux never could forgive.

There was at the end of Mr. Dreux's garden a high wall with a door in it. Mr. Allerton had a key of this door, for the garden was at the back of the house, and was much his shortest way of reaching it, which was an object, as they had now almost daily intercourse.

Though very angry he did not forget to take this key with him, and, having let himself in, proceeded up the walks in a towering passion, and ran up a flight of steps to the verandah, into which the library windows opened. The weather was fine, and Mr. Dreux, looking up from his writing, close

to the open window, was astonished at the vehement passion exhibited in his face, and which was too great to suffer him to speak at his first entrance.

He came into the room, and taking out the newspaper, flung it towards his supposed enemy, struck his hand violently on the table.

"What *is* the matter?" exclaimed his host.

"If—if ever I come into this house again," he stammered.

"Which I hope you will to-morrow," replied Mr. Dreux, without the least appearance of anger, for he was quite used to him.

"Will you listen to me, Sir?" stammered Mr. Allerton. "Do you see that newspaper?"

"Yes, I see it," he replied, pushing a chair towards him. "Come, my dear Allerton, sit down, and try to be calm."

"Calm!" repeated Mr. Allerton. "Sit down in your house! If—if ever I do—" and here he gave the table another blow.

"Give me your hat," said his host, rising and taking it from him, at the same time giving him a gentle push towards the chair.

"Will you read that letter?" cried Mr. Allerton, more angry than ever, and at the same time throwing himself into the chair which he had so vehemently abjured.

"Yes, to be sure I will," answered its supposed writer, speaking in the most soothing tones of his pleasant voice, and quite disturbed at the painful

excitement he manifested. "What am I to read? the letter on this page?" He took up the paper with such perfect coolness, and read it through as if it was so utterly new to him, that Mr. Allerton already began to think there must be some mistake, and when, after finishing it, he looked up for an explanation, he felt ashamed to give it him.

He was a man who of all things detested ridicule; he now began to feel that he really was in a ridiculous position; but if his friend thought so too, he had the delicacy not to betray the slightest consciousness of it. And was it likely, whatever Hewly might have said, that *he* would hold him up to derision in an anonymous letter? That this same man who now sat opposite to him with the honourable uprightness of his soul so plainly stamped upon his noble features could be such a master of dissimulation as to be capable of looking up and saying, "I shall be glad of an explanation, Allerton. I do not see what this letter can have to do with your anger against *me*."

"Against *you*," repeated Allerton, aroused to renewed irritation partly against himself, partly against his curate, and partly against his friend for taking it so coolly;—"Against *you*!" Look at it again. Can you tell me you are ignorant from whose pen it proceeded? Do you think I can be so familiar with your style and not recognise it there?"

He paused when he had got so far, astonished at

the effect of his accusation. He had been accustomed to see him so perfectly unmoved when he tried to quarrel with him, and so ready to excuse any ebullition of anger when it was over, that the glow of incredulous indignation which mounted to his very temples, was no less new than startling.

It was however not for long—though long enough to banish every vestige of suspicion and completely calm his passion—that he had to wait before it subsided. After a struggle to regain his composure he took up the newspaper, which in the first moment of offended pride he had thrown from him, folded it, and returned it, saying, with tolerable calmness,—

“The warmth of your temper has been an excuse for many past accusations, but this is a suspicion which no passion can possibly justify.”

Perfectly silenced, and feeling deeply hurt, Allerton took the paper, and his host, still struggling to prevent any further outbreak of displeasure, got up and took a few turns up and down the room, the glow gradually leaving his features, but leaving such an expression of mortification as could not fail to pain the person who had caused it, who, notwithstanding the reckless manner in which he had wounded him, had in the bottom of his heart more regard for him than for any one else in the world.

But when Dreux came up to him again and with something like his usual manner proposed that they should go down into the garden, instead of his ordinary vehement apologies when they had had a

difference, he simply said, "I am sorry I have hurt your feelings," and went down into the garden far more pained at his keen sense of the accusation brought against him and his struggle to preserve his usual manner, than he would have been at any display of irritation, however violent.

"I am sorry I have hurt your feelings," he repeated, when they had reached the bottom of the garden and were turning towards the house again.

"Do not think of it. Pray do not allude to it again," replied Mr. Dreux, wincing at the very mention of the thing.

"I did not mean to annoy you by allusions to what I am thoroughly ashamed of, but you must let me at least express my contrition," was the reply.

This garden, which was beautifully laid out and adorned with several fine elm-trees, was a very favourite resort with its owner, particularly when his temper was at all ruffled by little petty vexations, and to Mr. Allerton it was a real boon, saving him from many an intemperate outbreak, for when he felt himself getting hot in an argument, he used to go out and walk for a while, and return all the better for its fresh air and cool shades.

On the present occasion it had a healing influence, and after a few minutes' walk, the two gentlemen began to converse very amicably on subjects about which they were not likely to disagree, till, on a sudden, Mr. Dreux exclaimed,—

"Allerton, do answer me one question. It was not your *own* idea that I wrote that letter? Surely some one else must have put it into your head?"

"Since you ask, I have no hesitation in saying that I never should have dreamed of suspecting you if it had not been suggested to me."

"By whom? Was it not by Hewly?"

"Yes, it was," replied Mr. Allerton, and partly from a sensation of irritation against him, partly by way of retribution, he related the conversation they had held that morning, not even omitting the hint that Dreux only *professed* friendship for him, held up his opinions to ridicule, and would gladly get him into a scrape.

Instead of being angry, Dreux laughed at this, and said,—

"Why did you not tell me that at first? Do you suppose I care what *he* thinks of me? Here have I been fretting myself for the last half-hour, and making a great merit of forgiving you, instead of which, if I had known what you have just told me, I should have thought nothing of it. But, my dearest Allerton, what a pity it is you should be so much at the mercy of those with whom you associate; how can you allow yourself to be played upon in this way, and made a tool of? You surely know that Hewly cannot bear me, and can scarcely speak civilly to me. Nothing would please him better than to set us at variance. As to my trying to bring you over to my side, *that* is a proof of my friendship and

sincerity, which, even if it were any business of his, ought not to surprise him. Besides, he knows perfectly well that the attempt has been mutual."

Allerton replied by violently inveighing against the conduct of Hewly, and declaring that he would not be influenced by him in future.

"And as to your being got in some awkward predicament by *me*—let me use the privilege of friendship, and entreat you to be more cautious. I am quite sure that you scarcely approve of some of the alterations which Hewly has induced you to sanction. And if serious notice should be taken, who will be to blame? Not I, Allerton. Nor Hewly either, so much as yourself, for suffering your better reason to be overborne by him—a man so much your inferior in intellect and uprightness of mind."

"I ought to have a man like you for my curate; you never take advantage of my temper, you always advise me for the best, and after every quarrel we are better friends than ever."

Mr. Hewly, who long before this had expected the return of his Rector, began to feel rather uncomfortable at his protracted absence. He could not account for it; and as the evening wore on, he wished he had not ventured upon his bold suggestion. But his uneasiness was nothing to what it would have been if he could have seen him after dinner sitting with Mr. Dreux in the library, discussing the letter, his curate, and the said

curate's opinions, with most perfect confidence in his honour and good faith,—actually he would have thought taking counsel of the enemy.

"I am astonished," said the over-generous Mr. Allerton, "that I could, for a moment, have thought this trumpery letter resembled your composition. It is very badly written."

The answer was—"Yes, very badly written, but the worst of it is that it's TRUE. It begins by remarking that you always preach in your surplice."

"Well, what of that? Surely that is a thing of no consequence!"

"Not the slightest consequence in the world; then why do it, in this place, contrary to immemorial custom?"

"People call it the badge of a party, and they have no right to do so; it is very unjust."

"Not unjust to *you*, certainly, for you have always openly acknowledged your party. If I see a man in the uniform of a soldier, how am I unjust if I take it for granted that he serves in the army?"

"I choose to follow the ancient custom of the Church."

"What! even contrary to her expressed desire? I do not wish to go into any question as to what *is* the ancient custom, because our Church expressly tells us that every particular Church hath authority to change ceremonies and rites. Grant, then, that

the ancient custom has been changed: you are not an obedient son of the Church if you restore it, for she says, 'He ought to be rebuked that doth willingly and purposely break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church (and here she must surely mean the *existing* ceremonies), as he that offendeth against the common order of the Church.'

"Well, let that pass," said Allerton, impatiently.

"As to the latter part, it certainly contains a much more serious charge; and I must ask you, my dear Allerton, where you find any warrant in Scripture for such observances—such bowings and prostrations?"

"I find plenty of warrant in the ancient practice of the Church."

"What Church? But not to go out of our way to argue about that, we here touch upon one of our chief grounds of difference. *You* honour the Scriptures so far as they seem to uphold the Church, *I* honour the Church because she holds the doctrines of the Scriptures."

"And pray," said Mr. Allerton, "how do you reconcile it to your conscience to condemn the accumulated wisdom of ages, and despise the traditions of the early saints?"

"Are, then, their accumulated wisdom and holy traditions so contrary to the spirit of Scripture that I cannot uphold both?"

"Don't argue unfairly, Dreux. Is not the Church

the only true interpreter of Scripture? has not she herself the best right to say whether or not they agree?"

"I demur to your proposition—the Holy Spirit is the true interpreter of Scripture; but if I agreed with you, tell me what the Church is?"

"If you mean in whom is this authority of the Church vested, I say, in the three orders of priesthood—the bishops, priests, and deacons—of this and past ages."

"Well, I will meet you on your own ground: and I ask, being possessed of this authority as well as yourself, where do you find that the Scriptures require us to be subject to any such traditions as those you think you ought to honour? Where do you find it laid upon this generation as a duty to be subject to the souls of past generations? Besides, has not each generation in its turn been the present? If, then, the generation of hundreds of years ago was born to follow tradition, and was not able to judge for itself, how can it be able to judge for me, so that I should be subject to its laws? How can you say you are so bound, for *I* can find no such law; on the contrary, I find that the Scriptures assert their own exclusive authority. And as for the traditions of men and their 'fond inventions,' I find no warrant for them. But so far from it, I find this injunction, 'Add thou *not* unto *His* words, lest He reprove thee,' and, 'If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written

in this book, and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.'

"However, no doubt you will tell me that you deny the authority to a solitary individual, though you grant it to the whole body. To that I can only reply that we are both in the same case: if one has no right to say, 'This is the meaning,' the other has no right to say, 'No, it is not.'"

Allerton, who with his arms upon the table had been earnestly listening to his friend's remarks, said, when he had finished, "There is one thing, Dreux, and only one, in which I wish you would follow my example."

"What is that?"

"Since the first few weeks of our acquaintance I have never obtruded my opinions upon you, and I should be very glad if you would treat me with equal forbearance."

"Impossible! Do we not differ in the most essential particulars, and with that belief can you really expect me never to try to convince you, or, if I did not, could you believe in the sincerity of my regard?"

Allerton coloured on hearing this, and said, "By that remark you call in question the sincerity of mine."

"I had no such thought, nor do I in the least question it."

"Then," persisted the other, "you *must* either

excuse me from the belief that I do not consider religion of half the importance you do, or you must think I hold my views of it in a very half-hearted manner."

Finding that he waited for an answer, Dreux replied, "I do not think that any man who professes that he has never suffered under the burden of his sins, nor caught at the free grace and mercy of God as his *only* refuge, can, in the nature of things, attach so much importance to his religion as the man who *has*. It cannot be so present to him, or so real."

"Well, I suppose I must take that for an answer," said Mr. Allerton, rising up with a sigh, "but I do wish you could let me alone."

After this they went into the garden. He was in a tranquil, thoughtful humour, and his friend took this opportunity to press on him the more careful study of the Scriptures, to see "whether these things were so." He listened with patience, almost with pleasure—for it gratified him to find himself the object of such persevering solicitude; and besides, the tones of his friend's voice always exercised an agreeable influence over him. He listened to it as to "a lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice;" and sometimes permitted a wonder to rest in his mind for a moment, whether his affection for this last-made friend might not in time sufficiently master him, to induce him to adopt *his*

principles, just as his late lamented friend at college, who found him a thoughtless, worldly young fellow, had so influenced his whole character as to induce him to take up *his*. If it were not for the sake of consistency, he felt that such a change might take place. His was a religion more of feeling than principle, and having no solid basis, might easily be moved. However, he roused himself at last, and took his leave, as usual, after a fresh quarrel, more bound to him than ever. He went home, and the next day had a dispute with Mr. Hewly, which he did not make up with half so much cordiality as usual; and carefully avoiding the least intimation as to what had passed in Dreux's house, peremptorily insisted on several slight alterations being made in the manner of conducting service; and then preached a sermon which verged in a very slight degree towards evangelical doctrine—not so much so, however, as to be detected by any but the most discerning of his flock, and was intended specially to intimidate his curate, and let him understand that he had better not push him too far, or there was no saying how far he might go the other way, on purpose to spite him. However, Mr. Hewly, though much alarmed by the said sermon, did not set it down to its true cause, and did not doubt it was all owing to Dreux's influence.

While all these events were taking place at Westport, things at Swanstead went on much as

usual, the chief circumstance that occurred being that Marion had her picture taken, at the request of her brother, for whom it was done.

It was a much more tedious business than she had supposed when she gave her consent to sit for it, and the artist was a very ill-tempered old gentleman. Marion was thankful when it was finished and sent to Westport. She could not bear sitting for hours in one attitude, with her hands dropped upon her knees, and her eyes directed towards a particular flower in the wainscot carving, and it was a great pleasure to receive a letter from Wilfred declaring that it was a most speaking likeness. So Marion, having stipulated that it should not be hung in the ordinary sitting-room at her uncle's house in Westport, dismissed it from her mind, and went to see her different poor people, and take leave of them, for she was to go to Westport in a week, and stay away three months,—a long time to look forward to. Mr. Raeburn was to escort her there, and remain a day or two. It was expected that Elizabeth's wedding would take place before Marion's return, and she was to be one of the bridesmaids.

About the same time that Mr. Raeburn and Marion arrived at their destination, Mr. Allerton, who had been out for a short excursion, came home, and having business to transact with Mr. Dreux, proceeded straight to that gentleman's house through the garden. It was about eight o'clock in the even-

ing. There had been a deluge of rain all day, and as he looked up to the windows of the library, which was lighted from within, they presented such a cheerful appearance that he quickened his pace, and running up the stone stairs, tapped briskly on the glass, as was his custom.

The footman, who at that moment was bringing in the tea-urn, knew the accustomed signal, and advanced to the window to open it. In the meantime Mr. Allerton had a full view of the room, which contained one more inmate than he had expected.

It had been a very late spring, and though already the second week in May, the evening was chilly, and a bright wood fire was burning on the hearth. Mr. Dreux was seated on a sofa beside it, with a Review in his hand; and close to the sofa stood a table, with a lamp upon it, and before the tea-urn sat a young lady.

All this Mr. Allerton saw at a glance, and would have withdrawn, but his tap had been observed. "This must be Dreux's sister," he thought, as the young lady turned her face that way; "her profile is very like his, and he said she was coming to visit him some time this spring."

"Come in, Allerton," exclaimed Dreux, as the window was opened, and Mr. Allerton's dripping umbrella taken from him.

He accordingly came forward, with an uncomfortable feeling of awkwardness and embarrassment at

his intrusion. He was introduced to Miss Dreux, feeling keenly conscious all the while that his appearance was not exactly "comme il faut," for his hair was in disorder, his boots splashed, and his whole outer man far from exhibiting that perfect neatness which generally characterizes a clergyman.

"If you'll allow me, Dreux," he then said, "I'll go to your dressing-room."

"Certainly," was the reply. "Joseph, bring a candle."

"That gentleman makes himself very much at home," said Miss Dreux. "So he is your friend Mr. Allerton."

Mr. Dreux laughed, and remarked that he had not made his first appearance under very favourable circumstances. His sister, then remembering that she had left her work up stairs, went to fetch it during the absence of the stranger. She had scarcely shut the door behind her when Mr. Allerton entered at another. He advanced with a candle in his hand, wearing a white cravat of unblemished purity, and a coat which seemed to attract the notice of his host, for he looked pointedly at it, and uttered the expressive word **INDEED**.

"Why, you see, my dear fellow," said Mr. Allerton, in reply to that short remark, "if I had sat all the evening in a wet coat I might have caught cold; besides, I am naturally anxious to appear well before your sister."

His host admitted the reasonableness of both propositions.

Miss Dreux then returned, and commenced the duties of the tea-table. She behaved to him with a little distance and reserve at first, and he mistook her shyness for pride; but as the evening drew on, he altered his mind and liked her very much, though he once or twice detected a lurking smile about the corners of her lips, which he rightly attributed to the ludicrous stiffness and awkwardness of his movements, for his borrowed coat was too tight for him. She was several years younger than her brother,—that is, about nineteen, and though not nearly so handsome, bore a general resemblance to him in her air and expression. She was, however, by no means without her attractions,—had, like her brother, a very pleasant voice, and was, moreover, of a joyous disposition, with a keen sense of the ludicrous, though without anything sarcastic or severe.

Though not timid, she clung to her brother with most dependent reliance, and looked upon her yearly visit to him as the greatest pleasure of her life. In religion he had been her only guide, and she had imbibed all her views on that subject from him; but her unaffected piety was certainly not likely to enhance Mr. Allerton's admiration, for he found out in conversation, even during that first evening, that she was "one of Dreux's sort."

However, he thought it must be a very disagree-

able sentiment indeed that a man could not endure from the lips of such a sweet young creature.

Elinor retired early, leaving the two gentlemen together, upon which Mr. Allerton divested himself of his coat, drew an easy chair before the fire, and having put a large block of wood upon it, and possessed himself of the poker, prepared for conversation.

"Well," said his friend, "and so you preached before the Bishop."

Mr. Allerton nodded. He was humming a tune, and did not wish to interrupt himself. When he had finished he continued looking at the fire for a few minutes, with a half-smile upon his lips; then, having given it one or two scientific thrusts, turned round, and said, "I have got a new teacher in my girls' school,—who do you think?"

His friend made several unsuccessful guesses.

"I found a note on my table before I went out from Miss Ferguson, saying that she should be happy to become a visitor, and that Miss Paton would take her class when she was out. They called almost directly, with old Ferguson. Miss Paton's an elegant young woman."

"Yes," said Mr. Dreux.

"Very elegant,—a perfect lady. I thought her manners quite interesting; she has a sweet smile. What's her Christian name?"

"Dora."

"Ah, not a bad name either. Well, she's an elegant young woman, as I said before."

Mr. Dreux replied as before, "*In-deed.*" This word seems to have nothing particular in it, yet when uttered by some people, it expresses all manner of indescribable things.

"What do you mean, Dreux?" said Allerton, quickly.

"What do *I* mean?" inquired that gentleman, with an air of unconscious innocence. "Why, what do *you* mean?"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Allerton. "I know very well what you have taken into your head; there's nothing in it, nothing whatever. I no more think of her than she does of me."

"Oh!" said Mr. Dreux, taking away the poker, and in his turn giving the log a few dexterous thrusts. "Then if any one asks me when it's coming off, I'd better tell them at once that there's nothing in it."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Allerton, ruefully, "I hope it's not reported in the town; I hope not. Most absurd, if it is. I never was in company with Miss Paton but twice. Surely, Dreux, it's not a common report in the town."

"Not that I know of," replied the person so appealed to, with the utmost coolness. "I never heard any one breathe a syllable of it but yourself, just this minute, and you may depend upon my not telling, Allerton."

The victim made a feint of being very angry.

"Well," proceeded Mr. Dreux, "so you preached before the Bishop?"

"Yes, to be sure, and dined with him on Monday."

"Did he say anything about your sermon?"

"Not much; I took care to choose a practical subject, and treat it what might have been called cautiously,—in short, to exercise 'the wisdom of the serpent;' but I don't want Hewly to know that. However, he sent to ask for my sermon, and I gave it. He was tolerably frank in conversation when I dined with him, but yesterday morning I called, and he received me politely, though I thought just a little coldly,—for you know I notice anything like coldness. I think he was not at all cordial, but perhaps as much so as I had any right to expect, he being rather one of your sort. However, he expressed himself pleased with the schools, and the restorations in the church, and then said, 'And pray how is your friend, Mr. Dreux?' I thought he emphasized the word 'friend' very strongly, and I said you were very well, I was happy to say. 'And how do you manage your disputes, Sir?' he said, in his slightly pompous way; 'which is pupil, and which is master?' 'Disputes, my Lord!' I answered. 'You take it for granted, then, that we have disputes.' 'Undoubtedly, Sir, undoubtedly; or if not disputes, arguments and controversy,—for I take it no two men of honest minds can differ

without them.' 'We certainly have had a good deal of controversy,' I replied, and I wondered whether he had read any of it. 'So I presumed, Sir,' he said. 'The great problem for human thought is before you,—that question into which all religion resolves itself, and you solve it differently.' What question did he mean, do you think? 'What is truth?'"

"I should rather think he meant the more defined one. *How* shall man be just before God? that is the all-important question to which we give such different answers. The key-stone which supports the whole structure of religion; the one momentous problem on which hope and happiness hinges,—*How* shall man be just before God?"

Mr. Allerton was silent for a few minutes, then said, "By the bye, Dreux, what a crowd there was at your church on the Thursday evening that I went away. Was it any particular occasion?"

"The Thursday before last,—yes; there is an annual sermon preached on that day to the sailors. A sea-captain met with a great deliverance from shipwreck, and left a small sum of money to have a sermon preached on its anniversary for ever. After service we give away the money to the sailors' widows."

"O that was it! Well, as I went down the street to the coach-office, I was a little too early, so I stood a while in the porch, for it was full to the door, and there was such a strong light thrown on

to your face that I could see every change of expression distinctly, though too far off to hear a word you said. It had a very curious effect;—there you were, thundering away in dumb show, conveying impressions without ideas. Some old seamen standing beside me seemed to think they were very much edified, and said it was a very fine discourse. One old fellow informed me, that ‘that was Parson Dreux,—quite a Boanerges;’ and some of them seemed quite impressed with your face and action. Now there you, who speak extempore, have certainly an advantage over us; for my own part, I am generally rather quiet in the pulpit. But I could not help laughing afterwards, when I thought how Hewly would have looked at that distance. Like an image, I suspect; for he stands stock still and pours out his words in a smooth, sleek stream, never venturing to turn his head lest he should lose his place; but sometimes he gives his eyes a sweep round in an inexpressibly penetrating manner. If anything is amiss he is sure to see it. If ever there was a deep, artful—Never mind, I’d better keep my opinions on that subject to myself; but he quite gets the better of me.”

“Why did you stay at Chester so long?” asked Mr. Dreux, rousing himself from a reverie; “a whole week, was it not?”

“Yes. Why, the fact is, I happened to meet a poor fellow whom I used to befriend at Cambridge,

a miniature-painter; he paints beautifully, but not being the fashion he can scarcely get his bread. I declare he looks as if he had not enough to eat, and he asked me so wistfully if I had nothing for him to do that I was fain to tell him I wanted my portrait painted."

"Just like you. But what will you do with it?"

"I don't know. I have neither kith nor kin, excepting my old cousin, who kept me a boy as long as he could, and seems to think I'm scarcely a man yet; and I think I see myself having my picture taken for him! Well, I had no idea what a business it would be; I gave him a long sitting every day, and heartily sick I was of it. One day I fell asleep, but he said it was of no consequence, he had only been painting the hair. I think it very like, though it has rather a sleepy expression; so, when it was done, I hung it by a black riband round my own neck, and what to do with it I don't know."

"Let me look at it."

The possessor disengaged the riband, and, handing it over, said, with the assumed carelessness with which people generally speak of their own portraits, "Has the fellow done it well?"

"Excellent!—capital! I never saw a more satisfactory likeness."

"Rather sleepy-looking, is it not?"

"No; it only looks calm,—that is an advantage. I cannot bear a grinning portrait." And having

then inspected the picture thoroughly, he wrapped the riband round the case and put it into his own waistcoat-pocket, saying, very composedly, "You had better leave it in my possession; you will only lose it if I give it you back. If you marry to my mind it is just possible that I may give it to your wife,—that is to say, if you wish it; and I see no reason to alter my intention. In the meantime you know you don't want it, and I do."

Allerton laughed, though secretly much pleased, and said, "If I die unmarried, which I most likely shall do, it *may* help to keep me in your remembrance; and one does not like the idea of being utterly forgotten in the world."

"You will never be forgotten in the world as long as I am in it," was the reply.

And the fire being nearly out and the clock striking twelve, the two gentlemen separated, Mr. Allerton taking with him a lively recollection of his friend's sister and wondering whether she was engaged.

"And what made Dreux take it in his head to quiz me in that way?" he thought. "*I* saw his quiet smile when I said I should most likely die unmarried."

It was natural that Elinor should ask several questions about him the next morning as they sat at breakfast, and that her brother should give her the history of the rise and progress of their friendship.

"So, then, you have only been friends a

year," she said, "and you seem as intimate as brothers."

"So we are," was the reply; "and I never cease to hope that the day may come when we shall agree on the one important subject about which we now differ, that we may believe alike and work together. I thought, last night, he seemed particularly anxious to avoid the topics on which we differ,—probably in compliment to you, my dear."

"In compliment to me!" said Elinor, laughing merrily. "Oh no, dearest Arthur; gentlemen never pay compliments to *me*. I scarcely remember ever to have received one yet."

"Why, my dear, you cannot be in earnest?" said her brother, with an incredulous smile.

"I assure you it is quite true," said Elinor, amused at his surprise.

"But you must have had proposals?"

Elinor laughed and shook her head. "If I had been a heroine in a book," she said, merrily, "I should have had three or four despairing lovers by this time. But I don't mind confiding to you, dear Arthur,—that I not only never had an offer, but no gentleman ever said anything to me which I could have twisted into a pretence of preference; and yet my aunt sees a great deal of society, and, as I am always with her, a great many people pass in review before me."

Mr. Dreux replied, that it was very odd.

His sister continued: "You never read of nay

young lady in a book who has not had at least one admirer,—some have three or four; and I have come to this philosophical conclusion, that if one have so many others must go without.”

“Of course they must,” replied her brother, in the abstracted tone of a person trying to solve a difficult problem.

Elinor burst into a joyous laugh, and presently said, “But what a very common-looking watch-guard you have got, dearest; I must make you a better one.”

“This is not a watch-guard,” said her brother; “it’s a portrait that Allerton brought here last night. I think I’ll hang it in my dressing-room. Look at it,—is it not like?”

Elinor came close to her brother and took up the little likeness in her hand. “I should like to have such a one of you,” she said, after inspecting it. “Really this Mr. Allerton has something inexpressibly candid and amiable in his face,—what a pity that he is so unsound in principle! Do you still carry on your pamphlet war?”

“Oh no, we dropped it long ago; but not before I began to think it did more harm than good, which I did not expect.”

“How so, Arthur?”

“Do you remember my sending some to you?”

“Yes; and I liked yours very much, and I thought his extremely clever.”

“So clever, my dear, that you said they half

carried you over to his side, till you had read the answer."

"Yes; but when I *had* read the answer, I was satisfied."

"But that remark of yours opened my mind to an evil which I had not suspected. I thought the result would be good, and so it was to the really intelligent; but I begin to be convinced that there are many people in the world who really have not the power to think. These people were shocked when they found that things which they had believed from their childhood *could* be called in question. And when it was asserted of certain dogmas, that they were the doctrines of our Church and of the Bible, they knew so little, theoretically, of the faith they professed, that they could neither refute the assertion, nor give any reason why they held a contrary belief, and so their minds got thoroughly shaken. If all those who adorn the profession of Christianity by their lives and practice were well versed in what may be called its theory, the case might be different."

"But all Christians ought to know the doctrines of their Church," said Elinor.

"Undoubtedly they ought; but it has been for a long time the custom here to dwell almost exclusively on the Gospel invitation and the first rudiments of Christianity. Several very successful clergymen here might have been compared to men standing on the steps of a temple and inviting

people to come in; they held out their hands to them and helped them to enter the door, but when once they were in, turned, and without troubling themselves as to how the newly-entered would proceed, went on with their invitations to those without. By this plan they left their converts very ignorant of the deeper mysteries of religion, and to this day they are distasteful to them; so that when any of us preach on such subjects, which we are impelled to do both by inclination and necessity, particularly since Allerton and Hewly came, they do not scruple to lament the days of 'good old Mr. So-and-so, who never troubled simple-minded Christians with much about election, predestination, the corruption of the will, the nature of the sacraments, &c., but fed them with the sincere milk of the Word,'—never considering that by this commendation they are actually accusing their late pastors of not declaring to them the whole counsel of God, and that ignorance is of all things most likely to lead them astray."

As has before been mentioned, it was about eight o'clock in the evening when Mr. Raeburn brought Marion to her uncle's door. She soon found herself surrounded by her brother and cousins, the two younger of whom she had not seen since their infancy. Little more could be done that night than to sit on a sofa in the drawing-room, answer all inquiries, and endeavour to seem unconscious of the scrutiny she was undergoing, and not to notice the

sotto voce remarks that went on around her as to whether she was grown and what she was like.

Mr. and Mrs. Paton were chiefly occupied in another room with Mr. Raeburn relative to the affairs of their wards. Marion retired early, a good deal fatigued with her journey, and Elizabeth took her to her room, which was connected with a small parlour—half drawing-room, half boudoir. It was wainscotted, and the moon shining through the stained glass in the window made it look almost like a chapel, so silent and grave did it seem.

Elizabeth perceived that Marion felt a little agitated after her introduction to her young relations; she therefore did not remain in her room, but kissing her affectionately, rang for her maid and left her to her meditations.

Marion had many subjects for thought; her uncle's house, familiar to her imagination from childhood as the first home of her mother, proved, as might have been expected, totally different to the idea she had formed of it. It was a fine old place, such as is still sometimes seen in a country town. There was a beautiful garden behind it, and its mullioned windows, oak wainscots, and wandering stone passages, gave it altogether an air of "pomp and ancients."

Wilfred was very much grown since she had last seen him; he was also much more manly in appearance; he seemed quite domesticated among his cousins, who were evidently very fond of him.

Elizabeth and Dora, Marion thought, were both changed, but she scarcely knew whether for the better or the worse. Her third cousin, Rosina, was a perfect stranger to her, but even during that first evening Marion felt greatly attracted towards her. She was about fifteen, short for her age, and altogether childlike. She was the only one of the family who was fair, and so far she resembled Marion. It was rather remarkable that though the cousins were doubly related there was scarcely any likeness between them, each family resembling its respective father. Rosina seemed to be considered quite in a subordinate position by her elder sisters, who expected her to run up stairs for them, deliver their messages, and be attentive to their wishes; neither was she allowed to offer her opinion in the conversation. Her countenance was exquisitely modest and retiring, and her hair literally flaxen, and as she sat listening to the conversation of her elder sisters she looked as if she was born to admire the perfections of others and obey their wishes. Yet there was nothing unkind or exacting in the manners of the elder sisters. Rosina was not yet grown up, and they thought she *ought* to obey. Nor was there the slightest sullenness or unwillingness on the part of the sweet little girl, who treated them with a respectful deference not often bestowed or required. She admired her sisters and entertained the fond delusion that they were altogether her

superiors, and she could never hope to be so interesting or so elegant.

As for the only son, he was about thirteen, and was alike the darling and the torment of his sisters; he was extremely like Elizabeth, had the same brown hair and dark eyes, with all her liveliness of disposition. He had a reckless good humour about him, and generally walked with his head on one side, as if in the enjoyment of some exquisite joke. One of his great peculiarities was, that he could not pronounce the letter *r*; another that he had a striking facility in finding out whatever his sisters most wished him *not* to know; it was impossible to conceal anything from him, and it was currently reported in the family that he knew of Mr. Bishop's partiality for Elizabeth some time before any one else found it out. It was a subject on which he took special delight in teasing her, notwithstanding which she was his favourite sister,—a distinction which she did not deserve, for she had done more to spoil him than all the rest of the family put together, even including his father, who rather enjoyed to hear him tease Elizabeth by asking at table or other embarrassing times, "Pa, why does Fwed Bishop dine here so much oftener than his father?" or, "Pa, why does Elizabeth have so many letters now Fwed Bishop's in the Highlands?"

Marion found the whole family busily engaged in discussing a bazaar, which was to be held in the

Town Hall for the benefit of the infant-schools. After breakfast, Mr. Raeburn having gone out to call on some of his old friends, Mrs. Paton reminded her daughters that they must give her their help in ticketing the articles for sale, while she and the other ladies of the Committee were engaged in deciding on the position of the stalls. Marion offered her help, and Elizabeth proposed that they should adjourn to the little parlour before mentioned, and have the articles conveyed up stairs to them in large baskets, And there, Elizabeth said, they should be quite free from interruption.

Rosina had a governess, with whom she was engaged all the morning, so that the party only consisted of Elizabeth, Dora, and Marion. Elizabeth had many things to say about Mr. Bishop, who was absent on a short tour in the Highlands, and Marion had some questions to ask about her old friend, Frank Maidley, who was spending the long vacation at Westport, and making chemical experiments with a very talented apothecary, who had the care of his younger brother, Peter.

They were in full conversation when the door was pushed open, and Wilfred and Walter entered and inquired whether there was any admittance; they had nothing to do, they said, for Mr. Lodge (the clergyman who gave them lessons) was gone to a Visitation, and they were quite willing to help with the tickets. The offer was declined, but it was evidently their intention to remain and be amused,

for they presently commenced looking over the fancy articles and making various disrespectful comments upon them. They were a considerable interruption, for they changed their position frequently, hovering about their sisters' work-baskets, snipping bits of thread to pieces with small scissors, and setting thimbles on the tops of their large thumbs.

"Why, Walter," said Elizabeth, "you seem quite grave and absent this morning?"

Walter murmured something about his "heart's being in the Highlands."

"Are his two little coots come back again?" said Dora.

"No, and I am afraid they never will. They should not have been allowed so much liberty. Walter had just got them perfectly tame. They looked very pretty yesterday splashing in the water, and this morning they were gone."

"Well, perhaps they will come back again, after all," said Dora, in a sympathising tone.

"O no, Dora," said the little boy, in what was a very grave and rueful voice for him, "I'm sure they never will; but," continued the youthful philosopher, "what's the use of sighing when coots are on the wing. Can we prevent their flying? No. Very well, then, let us merrily, merrily sing." Having uttered this quotation the young gentleman went away to look after some of his other pets.

"Is Frank Maidley coming to dinner to-day?" inquired young Greyson.

"No," replied Dora, with whom that young gentleman was no great favourite, "I am happy to say he is not."

Marion looked up surprised, and her brother exclaimed, "Oh, Marion, I quite forgot till now to mention that I wish, if you can, you will leave off calling him by his Christian name. He is very familiar now, and I think, if you called him Mr. Maidley, he might take the hint. He always speaks of you as Marion, and I do not like the idea of his calling across the table to you by your Christian name."

Marion smiled. Her brother was becoming a man sooner than she expected. Young Greyson was nearly eighteen, and though perfectly unaffected, and even retaining a good deal of boyish simplicity, had a great idea of the respect with which he should like his sister to be treated. "I will try to leave it off, dear," she replied.

"I don't mean to say that he's ungentlemanly," said Wilfred; "but he does not care who he laughs at, and he is so very familiar."

"In not caring who he laughs at he presents a point of resemblance to the speaker," said Dora. "I wish you would leave off that improper habit, Wilfred."

"Why, Dora," was the reply, "you would not mind who I laughed at if I revered Mr. Hewly's

absurdities. Besides, every age has its characteristic: one was called the golden age, some were the middle ages (I suppose for want of something better to distinguish them), some were the dark ages, and people call this the age of machinery, but I call it the age of jokes. I must make jokes; we all partake of the spirit of the age."

"And a very proper name for it," said Dora. "I often spend a whole evening without hearing one word spoken in earnest; everything is made ridiculous; you alter the meaning of words; you contrive to see something absurd in everything, even in religion."

"Even in religion," repeated Wilfred. "Why, Dora, if I were inclined to retort, I might say how absurd it is to suppose that the things I have laughed at in Mr. Hewly have anything to do with real religion."

"But you have no right to laugh at a clergyman."

"I can't help it," persisted Wilfred, "any more than I could help laughing when old Mrs. Browne said, 'Mr. Dreux was next door to an angel.' When first I came here I had the most exalted opinion of the religious people whom I met with. I almost thought that, like the Queen, they could do no wrong, and that everything they disapproved of must be improper. I must say that you all conspired to give me this impression. Even the gossip that goes on here is a sort of religious

dissipation ;—I thought myself extremely wicked to see its absurdity. But now I have learnt to distinguish between religion and the foibles of those who profess it. I know better than to think the nonsensical way in which some good people go on is any part of their religion, or owing to it ; but this does not make me sceptical as to their sincerity. As for that Mr. Hewly ——”

“Well,” interrupted Dora, who did not wish that subject to be introduced again, “we have discussed him so often that we know perfectly each other’s opinions about him. But what I meant to say was, that you cannot see the foibles of religious people without respecting them less, and, consequently, respecting their religion less.”

“I am willing to change the subject,” replied Wilfred ; “only I must say that I don’t believe it was ever intended that any one person should respect another so much as to think all his foibles trivial simply because they *are* his.”

CHAPTER IX.

A PATENT ANTI-TALKING SOCIETY.

IN the evening of the same day the young people were all sitting together in the drawing-room. Mrs. Paton generally spent her evenings with her husband in his study when they had no company.

Wilfred had been playing a spirited march on the piano, and having brought it to a flourishing conclusion, he turned round on the music-stool, and said to his sister, "So, my little Marion, I am glad to see you so busy fixing those tickets. You will see a great many people to-morrow. I wonder what idea you have formed of the society here."

"Oh, a very brilliant one," said Marion. "Of course I expect a great deal, from all I have heard."

"Yes," said Elizabeth, in a tone of pique, "and I wish you would leave Marion alone to form her own opinion. And as to the parties ——"

"Now I'll just tell you, Marion," interrupted Wilfred, coming and sitting by Elizabeth, "what they *are* like. I shall never forget the first party

I went to. I'm sure I don't know why I should have been expected to enjoy myself, sitting on a cane-bottomed chair all the evening close to the door, with nothing to do and no one to speak to."

"But why did you not speak to some one?" asked Marion.

"Oh, they were nearly all old ladies, excepting a sprinkling of clergymen, who talked in knots of two or three. I overheard the conversation of two of the old ladies;—they talked of how the parish soup had been burned to the bottom of the copper, and what was the best way of stitching up tracts in wrappers. But, Elizabeth, you promised to play at chess with me to-night."

"Oh, do play with him, Elizabeth," said Dora, "it will stop his tongue."

"Why are you so much afraid of my talking? Marion will soon be able to judge for herself whether the parties are as delightful as I say they are or not! Oh, here are the men;—red or white, Elizabeth?"

"I always play with the white," said Elizabeth.

"Oh yes, since Mr. Bishop said he always gave the white to a lady, because white was the emblem of innocence. But for myself, Marion,—(though I sincerely hope *you* will profit by the delightful society here),—for myself, I think of giving it up, for I feel that it is quite time I began to think of some plan for the benefit of my fellow-creatures;

and unless I give up the enthralling pleasures of society I do not see how I can perfect one."

"What might the plan be?" asked Marion.

"Why, my dear, I don't mind telling you, as you are my relation, that I intend to invent another Society. I think I shall call a meeting on the subject."

"Oh! no more meetings!" exclaimed Elizabeth; "we have one now more than once a-fortnight, besides all the little private District Meetings and Teachers' Meetings. I shall not patronize you if you have any more meetings."

"Yes, I must have a meeting for my Society;— I mean to be President of it myself. I think of calling it the Hold-your-tongue Society, or the Total-abstinence-from-talking Society, and I hope it will do a great deal of good here; for besides putting a stop to all the scandal, all the flattery, all the talking about other people's concerns, that now goes on at the parties, it will also prevent bad grammar among the lower classes and inelegant diction."

"Then the members are never to talk any more?" said Dora.

"Certainly not. I must talk of course, or else how am I to make speeches to the members in praise of silence? But I shall not allow any one else to speak. It's very trying, Marion, to see you laughing at my honest attempts to benefit my fellow-creatures."

"I would join the Society," said Elizabeth, "if I did not think it would put a stop to social intercourse."

"My dear madam," said the self-elected President, "your remark can only proceed from a total ignorance of what social intercourse really is (in Westport, I mean). Social intercourse is neither more nor less than a meeting for the express and avowed purpose of dining or drinking tea;—sometimes a friendly cup, sometimes a quiet cup, sometimes green, and sometimes black,—but always tea; and generally, but not constantly, accompanied by bread and butter. The members of my Society shall meet frequently for this purpose, and their faces will beam with the expression of every social and silent virtue."

"And a very sweet picture they will present, I have no doubt," remarked Elizabeth; "but I do not see how they are to communicate their sentiments."

"I shall invent a set of signs for them," replied the President. "For instance, a gentle closing of the right eye might say, 'How do you feel yourself?'—a similar movement of the left might express, 'Dear Mr. Dreux was very powerful last night, wasn't he?'—a tender moan might express sympathy,—and a slight skip on the floor, accompanied by a brilliant smile, hilarity. I shall not allow of any more complicated signs than these. Marion,

don't laugh ; Elizabeth, you can't move,—you're in check."

"I hope the Society will prosper," said Marion ; "but I wish to observe, that *I* do not mean to be a member."

"But I thought," observed Dora, "that you had involuntarily an opportunity of trying this very plan at Mrs. Browne's party. I thought you said no one spoke to you, and that you did not like it?"

"I did not like it at the time, but being one of those excellent people (check) who can find sermons in stones, and something or other in everything, I soon began to turn my painful circumstances to good account by moralizing upon them. 'Now, Wilfred, my dear boy,' I said to myself, 'we all have our trials, and I wish you may never have a worse than this which you are now labouring under. It's true, my dear fellow, that you're very hungry, being what's called a growing lad, and having had nothing to eat but one three-cornered bit of muffin, and I don't see any prospect of your having anything more till supper-time, when perhaps you may get a sandwich and a strawberry ice, which you will like very much, being cold yourself, and the wind through the key-hole so silently blowing into your ear, will soon provide you with an earache.' Well, after I had reasoned with myself for some time, I found it had done me a great deal of good, so that I began to feel a sweet resignation stealing

over me. So being restored to good temper, I began to look out for something to amuse myself with. First, I counted the spots in the carpet, and made out how much money they would bring in if they were pounds in the Three per cents. After that I considered whether I could live on such a sum if I had it, and I decided that I could, and that I should have something over for charity. When I had exhausted that subject, I took a view of Mr. King's wooden leg, and considered what I would do with it if it was mine."

"There, you're checkmated," cried Elizabeth in triumph.

The President stopped for a moment, and looked rather ruefully at the board, after which he resumed his discourse, and began to set the men for a fresh game.

"Well, all this time the gentlemen were talking together in a corner, and the ladies—never mind what they discoursed about,—so I went on with my thoughts. I thought if I were Mr. King I would have my cork leg hollowed out, and divided into three compartments, each with a little door, and a lock and key to it. In the lowest compartment, about the instep, I should have a musical-box like the musical snuff-boxes, and when music was desirable, I should wind it up for the amusement of my friends. 'Foot it featly,' should be one of the tunes."

"And the leg-acy?" suggested Marion, amid the laughter of her cousins.

"Well, in the second compartment, about the ankle, I should carry a knife and a few pamphlets, a pair of bands, and a card-case, with some other trifles, besides one or two of my best sermons, so that if I were to be asked by a clerical friend to preach for him on any sudden emergency, I could produce a sermon at once out of my leg. In the third compartment, the calf, I should carry my prayer-book and hymn-book; and as you see some people unlock little boxes in their pews and take out their books, I should unlock my leg and produce mine.

"Then only think what a man I should be for a pic-nic! I could carry all the knives and forks and the corkscrews in my leg. As for you, girls, I should convey your books, fans, and sal-volatile bottles from church with the greatest ease. I should, in fact, be quite a treasure."

"No gentleman shall carry my books from church again," said Elizabeth; "I never knew one yet who did not forget to give it back at the right time."

"Ah!" said the President, "and the number of little square parcels that used to come on Monday morning with Mr. Fred Bishop's compliments, and he was sorry he had accidentally carried Miss Paton's books home with him. I always used to think there was a note inside as well as the book."

Elizabeth laughed. She rather liked to be rallied on that subject. "Mr. Bishop always wanted to carry my parasol too," she said, "but I told him the other day that I really could not allow it any longer, for as soon as he gets warm in conversation he begins to flourish it about and whisk off the heads of the thistles by the road-side in the most reckless manner, so that either the hook or the handle is sure to be snapt before we get home. Since we have been engaged, I have never had a parasol with a handle!"

Walter, who had often accompanied Elizabeth in these walks, here burst into a chuckling laugh. He had been so perfectly silent during the last half-hour that they had quite forgotten his presence, and had talked with less caution than they ever used when aware of his neighbourhood. Being perfectly conscious of this, he was extremely quiet, and thus collected several little things to torment them with on future occasions; but being now reminded of his existence, they immediately changed the conversation, and finished the evening with music, to his great chagrin.

The breakfast cloth was not removed the next morning before Mrs. Paton left the room, anxious to complete her arrangements for the coming bazaar. She left some employment for her daughters, which she said would occupy them about two hours at home, and they were then to come and help her. She had not been long absent when a lazy-looking Mayor's officer made his appearance, with a message .

to the young ladies: they were to send their mamma a quantity of cut evergreens and some flowers.

The girls accordingly went out to give orders to the gardener, and returning, found young Greyson with his elbows on the table and a book before him, with which he seemed perfectly absorbed.

"Wilfred," said Marion; but he was so intent he did not hear her.

"Let him alone, Marion," remarked Elizabeth; "he is always quite absent when he has an interesting book. What has he got now?"

"Some learning or other, no doubt," said Dora, gaily; "he's always either reading a learned book or else talking nonsense.

"What did you say?" inquired young Greyson, looking up.

They repeated the last remark.

"The reason is obvious," he replied; "I read to please myself—I talk to please *you*."

"If you would read us some of your books aloud instead of talking, we think it might be more improving—begging your pardon for the remark," said Dora.

Young Greyson instantly began to read aloud from his own place: "The contrary of glaring are 'clandestine instances,' where the nature sought is exhibited in its weakest and most imperfect state. Of this, Bacon himself has given an admirable example in the cohesion of fluids, as a

clandestine instance of the nature or quality of consistence or solidity. Yet here again the same acute discrimination which enabled Bacon to see the analogy which connects fluids with solids through the common property of cohesive"—

"That will do," said Elizabeth, hastily. "Now do put the book away—we want to ask you about the evergreens for the bazaar."

"Is there not a great quantity of evergreen in the garden?"

"Not half enough; we mean to erect a complete bower, a kind of triumphal arch, behind our own stall."

"What do you want me to do towards helping?" said the philosopher, stretching his arms. "You ought to have growing plants, as they will not be seen till to-morrow. I dare say my aunt would let you take some out of the conservatory."

"I never thought of that," said Dora; "let us go on to the assembly-rooms and hear whether mamma would like the plan."

No sooner said than done. The young ladies, entering in a body with Wilfred, were warmly greeted by the possessors of the different stalls, who, hammer in hand, were superintending the labours of some half-dozen Mayor's officers and public servants, who were knocking nails into the walls for faded election banners to hang upon, and appearing to have about as intelligent an idea of the effect intended to be produced as the poodle dogs ●

belonging to some of the ladies, who sat looking on in blank amazement.

At the lower end of the room were three ladies, who had got a large blue banner hanging like a curtain at the back of their stall. It was very handsome, but the words "Cobden and Free-trade," depicted on it in huge letters, did not look particularly appropriate, and they were accordingly in course of being hidden by some long wreaths of holly and idean vine. Next to them were some Quaker ladies, whose stall was very badly arranged in point of taste, though their articles for sale were far more costly and better manufactured than those of their gayer neighbours.

At the upper end, the farthest from the entrance, was Mrs. Paton's stall. It occupied the whole end of the room, excepting where some large folding doors opened into the reading-rooms, behind. None of the other ladies could compete with her, either in the quantity or taste of her goods. At the back of her stall were two large looking-glasses, which were to be decorated with the orange and white flags belonging to the Tory party. The girls set to work to make garlands of green corn to twist among the folds; and Elizabeth suggested that two beautiful mimosa plants, which had been brought from the conservatory, should be hung all over with little articles, till they resembled Christmas trees. Two Azalias, about six feet high, one white, the other orange, were set behind them, ornamented in the

same way, and certainly presented a beautiful appearance when covered with their exotic fruits.

Mrs. Paton had a great advantage over the other ladies in her conservatory, which was more than despoiled to form a background for her stall. The beautiful Azalias standing among the rich silk banners, with heliotropes, geraniums, and even some of the creepers, which had been carefully disengaged from their trellis-work, had an enchanting effect; one in particular, a *Cobaea scandens*, many yards in length, had been pressed into the service, and hung in long festoons across the glasses and over the curtains, in all the glory of its pale green cups, some of them changing to a splendid purple.

"Is it not beautiful?" they all exclaimed, as the lovely plant, which seemed to suffer nothing from the twisting of its flexile runners, was drawn backward and forward like a drapery, over the stall.

"I think it would be a good plan," said Dora, "if we were to give out that all persons who purchase at this stall to the amount of five shillings, shall have a bouquet presented to them."

"Dora, my dear, I give you great credit for the suggestion," said her mother; "you must rise early and cut the flowers."

"And get them beautifully made up," said Dora. "How I wish we might serve at the stall."

"There will be many things you *can* do to help me," said her mother, half regretting, as she looked at Elizabeth and Marion, that she could not permit

them to stand behind her stall,—for she was sensible that they would be a great ornament to it,—but their father had positively forbidden such an exhibition. “You will be present,” she said, “all day, and can supply me from the reserved fund of articles whenever my stall begins to look bare.”

“Ann Paton, can thee lend me one of thy helpers?” said the elderly Quaker lady. “Thee sees I am sadly behind-hand.”

Marion came forward immediately, and with her usual gentleness began to give her assistance.

The Quaker lady was making a wreath, and Marion went to her aunt to ask if she might adopt some of her rejected evergreens, for Mrs. Paton had quantities lying before her stall, enough, in fact, to decorate two or three of the tables of her less fortunate neighbours. Marion had been some time busily employed when Elizabeth came up. “Dearest Marion,” she said, “what are you about? how dull you must be!”

“No, not particularly,” said Marion; “but, Elizabeth, what a pity it is you allow these fine branches to lie wasted on the floor. I am sure some of the ladies would be very glad of them; only look what a contrast your mamma’s stall is to the rest of the room. Do offer some of these laurels to the old ladies opposite.”

Elizabeth cast a gratified glance towards her mother’s end of the spacious apartment, and said, “Certainly there is a great contrast, but then

mamma's stall *ought* to be the most attractive in all other respects, as she is to have no young ladies, except Helen Ferguson."

"But if your mother's is made so conspicuously attractive, it will really injure the sale at the other end."

"So much the better," said Elizabeth, laughing.

"But I meant," said Marion, "that if all the visitors crowd to that end, fewer things on the whole will be sold than there might be otherwise."

"But mamma's stall will be pre-eminent," replied Elizabeth.

"Oh, I understand," said Marion, with a quiet smile. "I thought the bazaar was for the Infant Schools, but it seems—"

"Marion, don't be moral," exclaimed Elizabeth, laughingly interrupting her. "I don't like the severer virtues. Ah, here comes that stupid Joshua, with a great basket full of babies' shoes, and little nonsenses. I must go and help to set them out, so good by, Marion."

Joshua was a young servant in the Paton family; he was renowned for his stupidity, but as it was so great that it made him quite an amusement to the family, it kept him his place when more estimable qualities might have lost him it.

"Good by, Elizabeth," said Marion, "but I give you fair warning that I shall make the Quakeress's stall look as well as I possibly can."

The two cousins then parted, and each advanced

to her own end of the room,—Elizabeth to add a finishing touch here and there to what was already the admiration of all the stall-keepers ; and Marion to twine the tendrils of an azure-flowering creeper among the folds of the blue banner, Mrs. Paton having rejected it as not harmonizing with her other colours.

After suggesting and planning the whole afternoon, and making use of her aunt's refuse, Marion had the pleasure of seeing the Quaker's stall really beginning to present an appearance of great beauty, though still not at all comparable to its *vis-à-vis*.

She had drawn the blue folds of the silk into less formal festoons, and finding that the Quaker ladies placed implicit reliance on her taste, she ventured on several other innovations, which were all taken in good part. In the midst of the preparations, one of the Quakers began to lament over a basket of cut flowers, which she said a friend had promised to bring her. "I wonder they are not come," she said, addressing Marion, "for friend Cowley always passes this way at noon ; thee understands."

Marion offered to go down stairs and look in the great hall if the flowers were come, observing that perhaps the people of the place had neglected to bring them up. The great staircase and the hall had been as quiet as those of a private house when she entered in the morning, and it never occurred to her that she might find them otherwise now.

She saw several sleepy-looking Mayor's officers in

the vestibule, from one of whom she learned that some flowers had arrived, and been put in a room at the end of a long passage, to which he pointed.

As it did not seem to enter the head of this worthy that it might be a graceful little act of condescension if he fetched them for her, Marion went down the passage as directed, passing several openings and staircases. She found the basket,—a flat one of moderate size, containing some exquisite geraniums, all arranged as if they had been intended for a horticultural show. She took up the basket, and being rather in a hurry, ran quickly up stairs and along a very lengthy lobby, passing several doors in search of the Bazaar-room. "How different this place looks coming up to coming down," she thought, in her unsuspecting heart. She next came to a door on which was painted "Committee-room," then to a Magistrates' room. In the same way she passed several others, and was surprised at the noises she heard within, at the slamming of doors, and passing in and out of policemen.

She now began to think she must have taken a wrong turn, in which suspicion she was confirmed by seeing two young gentlemen, who had been in conversation close to one of the doors, looking at her, and amusing themselves with her perplexity. If they had behaved in a gentleman-like manner she would not have hesitated to accost them and inquire the way, but as it was, the fragments of their discourse which reached her only added to her

confusion. "Very pretty creature," she heard one of them lisp, as he tapped his riding-boots with his whip, and then they both laughed, turning round to watch her movements; while the other expressed a wonder whether she had lost her way on purpose. Marion turned hastily round, and at the same time the door of the Committee-room opened, and a young gentleman of very different appearance came quickly out, and looked at her for a moment with surprise, but instantly observing her annoyance, and appearing to divine the cause, he bowed politely, and said, "You have lost your way, I believe, madam; will you permit me to conduct you?"

Marion gratefully assented, and he brought her up a little staircase, which gave into the great landing, close to the door of the Bazaar-room.

She presently perceived where she was, and turned with her natural grace to thank her conductor, who merely opened the door for her, and having bowed, took his leave.

Short as had been her interview, she had had time to observe several things respecting this young man which made him stand out in favourable contrast to her two tormentors. In the first place, he had evidently come out of the Committee-room in a very great hurry, but he checked himself, and conducted her with perfect deliberation, though the instant after he had shut her into the right room, she could hear him clattering down the stairs again at a tremendous pace. Then the two other young

men, perceiving her alone and unprotected, seemed to have taken delight in making her feel that such was the case, and that her intrusion had placed her in a ridiculous situation; but this agreeable unknown, though he only glanced at her face for an instant, seemed to have perceived her sensations by intuition, and had treated her with more deference than he might have thought it worth his while to bestow on a damsel under more favourable circumstances.

When she returned she found that her aunt had completed her arrangements, by having an arch formed of evergreens over the folding-doors, it having been agreed that they should be thrown open for the day of the sale, that the visitors might pass through the reading-room down stairs into the museum and conservatory, which belonged to the town, and were all under the same roof.

"Oh, I am so tired," said Elizabeth, throwing herself on to a sofa as soon as they got home. "I wish it was all over. Marion, you look quite pale; pray sit down and rest."

"I am not so tired that I cannot tell you a little adventure which I had this morning," said Marion, reclining, as directed; "it made me very uncomfortable at the time." She then related how she had lost her way, the rudeness of the two young men, and the sudden appearance of her knight-errant, who rushed out to the rescue just at the right moment. Tired as her cousins were, they seemed

completely roused by their curiosity to find out who this gentleman could possibly be.

"Was he handsome?" asked Elizabeth.

"Yes, I should say decidedly so."

"Do you think he was an officer?" asked Dora.
"Captain Manners is a very handsome man, and just the sort of person to help a damsel in distress."

"No, there was nothing military in his appearance. I should say he had rather a Grecian nose," she added, in answer to a question of Elizabeth.

"Then it was not Mr. Calvert, for his nose is hooked!"

Marion laughed, and inquired whether they expected to recognise him by description. "Perhaps he does not live in the town at all," she said; "he had evidently been sitting on some Committee, for I saw into the room when he opened the door, and there were ten or twelve grave-looking people within sitting round a green table, with papers and letters before them. Some of them looked like clergymen."

"Did your friend look like a clergyman?"

"Well, now you mention it, he was dressed in black, and I think he had rather a clerical air about him."

"Then, Marion, I think I know who it was," said Elizabeth, gravely. "I am sorry to bring your romance to an end; but if it is the gentleman I mean, he is married!"

"I can bear that intelligence with great equanimity," said Marion.

"Well, then, I think it was Mr. Beckett, the Vicar of Maston, a village about ten miles from here; he called a few days ago, and said he should be in the town during the week of the bazaar, for he was going to sit on a Committee for inquiring into the drainage of Maston fells and marshes,—a fearfully unpoetical subject, Marion; but he is just like your description."

"Then we will say it was Mr. Beckett," said Marion gaily; "and I say that Mr. Beckett is a gentleman, and certainly both handsome and considerate—he was quite young, Elizabeth."

"He looks young, but I think he is past thirty."

"He certainly did not look more than five-and-twenty."

And so the conversation ended, and the young ladies retired very early that night, that they might rise betimes to tie up the bouquets.

Mrs. Paton left soon after breakfast; but her daughters and Marion remained at home till noon, fastening up the bunches of flowers with riband.

"There," said Dora, looking round at the denuded green-house, when the last detachment of bouquets had been sent off, laid upon flat baskets, "mamma never does anything by halves; no other stalls will be at all comparable to hers; I am sure she will have by far the largest collection."

The young ladies were then dressed to go to the

bazaar. Their father had stipulated, that as they must needs be in the room a good deal to help their mother, their appearance should be as simple and inconspicuous as possible. Accordingly they and Marion were dressed exactly alike, in white crape bonnets, black velvet scarves, and white muslin gowns.

It was past one o'clock when they arrived, and the rooms were already almost full of visitors, who crowded to their mother's end. Elizabeth and Marion, who kept together, had so thoroughly seen all the articles for sale beforehand, that they scarcely cared to walk up to the stalls, but went forward to the top of the room to observe the general effect. Mrs. Paton's stall was magnificent, the bouquets lying among the articles gave a brilliance of effect that the other ladies could not hope to attain, and the delicate scent, for they were all made of the choicest flowers, completely filled the upper end of the room. Mrs. Paton had been rather annoyed at her husband's insisting that his daughters should be plainly dressed. She was therefore delighted, when Marion and Elizabeth came in, to observe that, with the proximity of the rainbow colours all round them, their own simplicity of appearance was a great advantage; in fact, if they had been gaily dressed among all that splendour of tint, they would have looked absolutely vulgar.

"Marion, there's the *lion*," said Elizabeth,

jogging her cousin's elbow,—“I mean that gentleman passing through the folding-doors into the library.”

“I see a gentleman's back,” said Marion carelessly, “does it belong to Mr. Dreux?”

Marion and Elizabeth then passed down the other side into the refreshment room, where ices and pastry were sold, all for the benefit of the same Charity. In the meantime Mr. Dreux, who had been teased to come and just show himself in the rooms, in token of his approval, took two or three turns, and then came and leaned against the pillar of the folding-doors, amusing himself, or rather beguiling the time, by watching the humours of the groups around him.

Elizabeth and Marion, having passed through the refreshment room, came into the library, and being satisfied with their view of the bazaar room, sat down upon a sofa in a window, and established themselves for a conversation.

Mr. Dreux, as they came leisurely up the room, was struck with the beautiful contrast they presented to each other, and Mrs. Paton being just then disengaged, he went up to her and inquired, who that *fair* young lady was, sitting with her daughter.

“That is my niece, Miss Greyson,” said Mrs. Paton; “she is come to pay me a long visit; she is a very sweet girl.”

“She has a very sweet face,” thought the *lion*,

"and 'more serene than Cordelia's countenance.' I think I know where I have seen it before."

Mrs. Paton was soon occupied with other purchasers, and Mr. Dreux having paid his compliments to the other ladies at her stall, went through the folding-doors to speak to Elizabeth, or rather to be introduced to her companion, and Marion looking up beheld her champion. He endeavoured to banish all recognition, from his bow, though he had come up on purpose to decide upon her identity with the unknown lady of the day before, and though he saw by Marion's face that she recognised him.

"I see you have entitled yourself to a bouquet," said Elizabeth, glancing at a combination of heliotrope and scarlet geraniums which he held in his hand.

"Yes, I have bought this thing," said he, drawing a long winding riband out of his pocket. "Mrs. Paton said I should find it of great use; but I cannot say I know exactly what it is."

"Oh, it is a knitting stirrup," said Elizabeth, smiling.

"One feels rather foolish carrying such a thing about," said the young divine; "but if I could find a lady who would do me the honour to accept it?" and so saying he held it out to Elizabeth, with one of those smiles which the ladies of Westport thought so fascinating.

Elizabeth laughed, and accepted the knitting

stirrup. He knows perfectly well that I am going to be married in a few weeks, she thought, so I will not be so prudish as to make any difficulty about it.

Having thus smoothed the way for a further offering, he turned to Marion, before whom he was standing, and with a peculiar smile playing about his lips, and lighting up his dark eyes, said, with a slight hesitation, as if doubtful how she might like it, "You have no flowers *to-day*, I think, Miss Greyson. Might I have the pleasure to present this bouquet, to be worn in honour of the day, which you have assisted to make so brilliant?"

Marion wished to thank him for his politeness of the previous evening; she therefore held out her hand for the flowers, saying, with a slight blush, "I would rather wear them in honour of yesterday."

"Yes, the bazaar-room looks brilliant indeed from here," said Elizabeth, who was rather surprised at what her cousin had said.

"The little pomps and vanities are set out in very tempting array," replied the young clergyman.

"What, Mr. Dreux!" said Elizabeth, "after sanctioning the thing with your presence, will you still object!"

"I don't know that I decidedly *object*," was the reply; "but I should not like to see my sister behind the stalls. I should most decidedly object

to *that*, and that reminds me that I must go and bring her here to see the bazaar, as I promised."

So saying, he bowed himself away.

"Elizabeth," said Marion, the moment he was out of hearing, "that is the very gentleman I told you of."

Elizabeth was quite astonished that Mr. Dreux should never have occurred to her before. "It could only be because he was generally so very much the reverse of attentive to ladies, that she had not thought of him," she observed.

"I thought he was quite attentive enough to-day," said Marion.

"You talk of him and his attention as coolly as if he were any other man," said Elizabeth, laughing. "You forget that he is a lion! . . . Yes, he was uncommonly agreeable, but in society he sometimes has the *appearance* of being afraid to pay any attention to a lady, for fear it should raise her hopes!"

Elizabeth laughed; but Marion perceived that she actually meant what she said, and answered, rather indignantly, "Well, I think a man must indeed have a high opinion of himself, if he thinks there is danger of his being too agreeable, when he does not try to make himself so."

"Oh, I dare say he knows that he might marry almost any disengaged lady in the place," said Elizabeth; "in fact, I do not see how he is to help

knowing it, and I by no means wish to intimate that I think him a conceited man ; on the contrary, I am often surprised at the graceful manner in which he gives way to the elder clergymen, though he is so much their superior in talents and position. Besides, he is a man of good family and fortune, and the most idolized clergyman in the place. Who that was disengaged would not like to be married to such a man ?”

Marion might have answered, “ I should not,” for Elizabeth’s remarks had made her champion seem much less interesting. However, she contented herself with saying, “ Of course, if the fancy that he might marry any lady he likes is very obvious, the young ladies here take care to keep him at a distance.”

Elizabeth laughed merrily at this remark, but did not answer, and just then young Greyson came up to them, saying, “ I have been looking for you all over ; the rest of our party have gone down through the museum into the conservatory. Will you join them ? They say they are quite tired of the bazaar.”

Elizabeth and Marion each took an arm and went down through the Committee-room, of which the latter had had a glance the day before, and then across a lobby in a museum full of rather musty specimens of stuffed birds and forlorn-looking animals, with their teeth sticking out in formidable array. The museum terminated at one end in

a broad flight of stone steps leading down to the conservatory, which was not so much of flowering plants as of botanical specimens, medicinal herbs, and foreign plants used in dyes and pigments.

"There they are, on a bench at the far end," said Greyson, "and Frank Maidley with them." They all came to meet the new-comers, and Marion was surprised at the height of her late companion, who, when they were seated on the bench, stood by them, and leaning his elbow on the mantel-shelf, looked down upon them with an easy smile.

"Now we'll show you what we've bought," said Greyson, taking up a tangled mass of articles from one end of the bench.

"That's mine," said Frank, as a lady's white knitted carriage-cap was held up. "I bought it of Mrs. Paton."

"This is mine," exclaimed Greyson, drawing forth a large anti-macassar. "The Quaker woman made me buy it. I told her it was of no use. 'Then,' she said, 'thee may give it to a friend.'"

"And that's my property too," cried Frank, as a muslin apron, worked with coloured crewels, was handed up in a woefully crumpled condition. "Old Miss King made me hand it all round the room, and because nobody would buy it of me, she made me take it myself."

"You seem to have been cruelly used," said Marion.

"But I really should have thought you might

have made more appropriate purchases," remarked Dora, endeavouring to disentangle a heart-shaped pincushion, stuck full of pins, from the fringe of the apron.

"Appropriate to what?"

"Why, to your condition as gentlemen. There were some beautiful slippers and braces, and some very handsome waistcoats, worked in lamb's-wool, and ready made."

"Do you think I would demean myself to wear a waistcoat made by a woman and worked with cabbage-roses?" exclaimed Frank Maidley, with ineffable scorn.

"There, this is mine," cried Greyson, as Elizabeth handed up a very elegant work-bag,—"*Quis?*"

"I'll have it rather than it should be wasted," replied Dora.

"You ought to have answered, *Ego*," said Frank.

"Greyson, hand me up my cap that I bought; I'll put it on and see how I look in it."

There was a very large mirror over the chimney-piece, so tilted as to present a beautiful reflection of the climbing plants hanging from the roof. Frank Maidley arrayed himself in the cap, which he tied under his chin, and then turned round to be admired.

"Your head reminds me of a dish of carrots and turnips," said young Greyson.

"My hair being the carrots. Thank you for the

simile. Miss Paton, may I trouble you to pass up my apron."

"Why, you don't mean to say that you are going to put it on?" said Greyson.

"Yes, I am. When the people are tired of the bazaar some of them will come down here, and perhaps I can dispose of these articles to them at half price. Besides, why should not I make myself ridiculous if I like on behalf of this pious cause?"

"You had better take the Macassar as a shawl then, I think," said Elizabeth. "It will make a very tasty finish to your dress."

"I will," said Frank, receiving the article and spreading it out over his shoulders with the inimitable awkwardness of a man.

"Now would you mind obliging us by standing a little farther off?" said Marion, with perfect gravity.

"In order that you may not seem to belong to our party, you know," added Elizabeth, to make the meaning of her cousin's remark the more obvious.

"O certainly, with pleasure. I'll go and stand at the other side of the chimney-piece, and if any people come down I'll look at you through my eye-glass, as much as to say, 'I wonder who those people are?'"

"Here *are* some people coming," said Elizabeth. "Now, pray unrobe, Mr. Maidley."

"Thank you, I don't at all mind this style of

dress. Yes, here they come,—old Dr. Hubbard and three young ladies; just look at the old gentleman.”

Dr. Hubbard was a short, stout man, rather bald, and very good-tempered in appearance. He went down the side of the conservatory, examining the plants and commenting on their properties aloud, till he came to Frank Maidley, before whom he paused with a comical expression of surprise, looking up at him with his head on one side and his hands behind him; he then came to speak to the Miss Patons, the three young ladies, who had come down with him, resolutely turning their heads away, as if afraid of laughing. This party withdrew, and were presently followed by another.

“Here are some more people,” cried young Greyson. “Would you believe it?—Mr. What’s-his-name Brown, and his mother. Now, Marion, you shall be introduced.”

“How came he by such an odd name?” asked Marion.

“There they are, examining the birds and beasts in the museum with the greatest curiosity, Brown as discontented as ever, and his mother trotting after him, admiring and wondering. Why, Marion, his real name is Athanasius, and people say that during his father’s lifetime the place was so full of Browns that there was no distinguishing them one from another; there was Brown the doctor, and Brown

the butcher, and a retired man who went by the name of Gentleman Brown; then there was a tall man whom they called Long Brown, and this Brown's father, who, being a little man, was called Brownie. However, he was determined that his son should have a name which should distinguish him from all other Browns whatsoever, so he had him christened Athanasius. He had made a pretty little property, so he sent his son to College and made a clergyman of him; but behold, when he entered upon his duties the people of the parish, not being of the learned sort, could not compass such a hard name, and as to have called him Mr. Brown would not have distinguished him at all, they always called him Mr. What's-his-name Brown; they even sent petitions to him directed in that style and title; at last it got to the ears of the upper classes, and now nobody ever thinks of calling him anything else."

Mr. What's-his-name Brown, who all this time had been examining the museum, now began to descend the steps, his mother following him. She was a tall, stout woman, not much like a lady, and not pretending to be one. He was a puny man, with rather a discontented expression, very straight black hair, a pale complexion, and precisely that air, manner, and appearance which in society is almost sure to cause a man to be overlooked and accounted a nobody. Everybody, however, said he was a very good man. But it has been remarked before that

people are very fond of finishing any observation of a disparaging nature by remarking that the subject of it is a *very good man*.

"He preaches a marvellously dry sermon;" or, "he is terribly dull in conversation;" or, "he spoke as if he was half asleep;" or, "nobody could make out what he meant; indeed, I don't suppose he knew himself, 'but I dare say he is a *very good man*!'"

Mr. What's-his-name Brown having reached the foot of the steps, began to examine the plants with an air of inquisitive discontent. Mrs. Brown, his mother, the pride of whose life he was, now came forward to speak to the young ladies, and cast a furtive glance at Frank, who, catching her eye, bowed politely.

"Me and my son were led to expect something worth seeing here, ladies," said the worthy matron, "but I can't say the plants are particularly handsome. Dr. Hubbard certainly said there was a very fine specimen near the *chimley-piece*."

"Yes," said the Rev. Gentleman, "he said a plant of stately growth."

"Did he?" cried Frank Maidley; "then he must have meant me."

Mr. Brown accordingly looked up at Frank Maidley, but did not appear to derive much satisfaction from the sight; on the contrary, he had the air of a man who felt that he had been deluded and ill-used by false representations.

"Could I tempt you with any of these little articles?" said Frank, in his blandest voice, pretending to think he was examining his toggery with a view to purchase.

"Frank," said Greyson, "here are half a dozen people coming down the steps. Do take that rubbish off."

"This is a fine room," remarked Elizabeth to Mrs. Brown, for she did not like to see her standing there and being taken no notice of.

"Yes; a fine room, indeed, Miss 'Lizabeth," said Mrs. Brown; "and the whole building is very handsome. They tell me it is in the *Elizabethian* style."

Elizabeth tried to give an air of courteous assent to the smile which she could not repress, and the whole party found it difficult to help laughing, when she went on to observe,—“that everybody praised the proportions of the magistrates' room, and said that really the *cemetery* of those pillars was perfect.”

"Marion, I think we had better come away now," said Elizabeth, blushing; "there are some more people descending the steps; and really Frank Maidley makes us quite conspicuous."

Marion gladly assented, and, having taken leave of the rest of the party, they went back to the Bazaar-room, where they found employment in replenishing Mrs. Paton's stall.

Though none of the young people liked to

acknowledge it, they were heartily tired of the bazaar, and longed for the time when they might go home again; it came at last, and they entered their own house with real delight. Then came the time for regretting the spoilt appearance of the conservatory, and all for the sake of *one day*. Through the evening the plants kept arriving, but most of them were very much shattered, and all were denuded of flowers. They were quite grieved to see the miserable appearance they made.

"I wish we had remembered our own dinner-party," they said, "before we destroyed all the flowers."

"Oh, by the bye, my dears," said their mother, "I have invited Mr. Dreux and his sister to come to us on that day; he brought her up to be introduced to me, and I thought he seemed rather disappointed that none of you were there. You must be polite to Miss Dreux; she knows no one here, and I dare say he will be very glad for you to take her about a little."

The next day Mr. Raeburn was to take a journey, and, as he did not know whether he could call at Westport before going home, Marion stayed at home to wish him good by. She had nothing to do, and offered to assist Elizabeth in adding up the accounts of a Club for the poor, in which she had formerly taken a great interest.

"And I shall go out, and take a ride with mamma

into the country," said Elizabeth, "for I am sure she wants a change after the fatigue of that bazaar; it took her a week to prepare for it, and I am sure it will take another week to put all the things away."

"Where shall you go?" asked Marion.

"Mamma says she really must go and call on old Mrs. Brown," said Elizabeth, "for she has never been to see her since she and her son took part of a farm-house about two miles out of the town, that he might walk in every morning. By the bye, Marion, what did you think of Mr. Allerton?"

"Mr. Allerton," repeated Marion, "have I seen him?"

"Yes, to be sure. Don't you remember, when we came out of the bazaar we passed through an open space like a lawn, with trees round it, and I told you it belonged to the almshouses,—Mr. Dreux was walking up and down there with another gentleman?"

"Oh, yes, I remember him perfectly, if that is the gentleman you mean,—a tall, Saxon-looking man, who walked school-boy fashion, with one arm over Mr. Dreux's shoulders."

"That was him."

"Indeed! I thought him a very agreeable-looking person."

"Dora used to go to his church," continued

Elizabeth; "you know I have often told you of it."

"Yes," said Marion. "What a pity it is that Dora should be so much changed."

"Well, good by for the present, dearest Marion," said Elizabeth, turning from that subject, as usual. "I do not like to leave you, but I hope, when Mr. Raeburn is gone, you will come out for a walk. Dora and Rosina will be down immediately."

Dora and Rosina presently came in, as Elizabeth had predicted, and Walter with them. And as there were presently some morning visitors to be attended to, Marion had not much time for her accounts; so that when she had seen Mr. Raeburn off, and sent messages to his mother and to her favourite children in the school, she had not been seated over the books many minutes before Elizabeth came back into the drawing-room after her ride, with her hat and habit on. She had been riding beside her mother's carriage, and inveighed against the idleness of her sisters in staying in-doors.

"Well, where have you been?" said Dora.

"To call on Mrs. Brown."

"Was she at home?"

"Yes, and so glad to see us. She was excessively anxious that mamma should 'do her the honour to stay to dinner. She had got the best end of a loin of veal at the fire, and she was sure we should have a hearty welcome.' But, Marion,

how industrious you are over those Club-tickets; what pains you take in checking them off by the book. I am sure I ought to feel very much obliged to you."

"One,—Martha Perry, ought to feel obliged to me," returned Marion, laughing good-humouredly; "for, do you know, Elizabeth, by your way of adding up her card you had cheated her out of threepence?"

"You are not in earnest, surely?" said Elizabeth, in a voice of dismay. "I hope the good woman has not found it out. I hope she does not think I abstracted that sum for my pocket-money."

"It does not appear what she thinks," said Marion; "but seriously, Elizabeth, she is not the only sufferer, though you certainly seem to have an idea of poetical justice, for in adding up some of the cards you have cheated yourself; and as, of course, I cannot abstract from them the surplus sums, you will have to pay what is deficient yourself."

"How much does it come to?"

"One and tenpence," said Marion.

"Well, it is very hard," said Elizabeth, "for I'm extremely poor just now. I think, as it is your doing, you ought to advance the money."

"I am not sure that I can trust you," said Marion, laughing. "What have you done with all the money you had yesterday?"

"All!—it was only nine shillings. I'm sure I

don't know where it's gone to. Let me see,—two shillings for stamped envelopes."

"Two shillings for stamped envelopes," repeated Marion, writing it down on a piece of paper. "Well, what else?"

"Eighteenpence for a blue calmia in a pot—Oh, Dora, you'll be sorry to hear that Athanasius has got a very bad cold."

"I wish you would leave off calling him so," said Dora. "I am sure, if you get such a habit of it, you will do it some day when you will be very sorry. And *you* particularly, ought not to laugh at him."

"Why *Elizabeth*, particularly?" asked Marion.

"Oh, because,—poor little man,—we used to think he admired Elizabeth, before Fred Bishop declared himself."

"And I am sure I don't know how he ever showed it," said Elizabeth, "except by paring apples for me at dessert. But it *is* wrong to laugh at him, particularly now he's unwell; however, his mother hopes fiddle-strings and paregoric will soon set him right again."

"Did she say so?" asked Dora, quietly, and with a slight glance at Walter.

"No; you know she didn't, Dora. But is not playing on the fiddle the solace of his life? Because *you* never laugh at anybody, is that any reason why I never should? I wish you would let me alone."

"I'll choose another theme on which to give you

good advice," said Dora. "You had better take off your hat and habit."

"Yes, I will, when Marion has made out my list. I saw such beautiful blue salvias in the cemetery to-day,—I wish it was not a sin to steal. Ninepence, Marion, for a purple salvia, which I fully believe will turn out a scarlet one; there's a very red hue about its buds: and eightpence for a globe-fuschsia,—that's all?"

"That comes to four shillings and elevenpence," said Marion. "Four and elevenpence from *nine* shillings,—how much remains, Elizabeth? I shall not lend you anything, for you have enough to pay your debts, and threepence over. Now, do go and take off your habit."

"Yes, presently. Dora, has any one called?"

"Only young Mr. Morton."

"What did he say?"

"Oh, he said just what all gentlemen say during their first call. He observed that the neighbourhood was very beautiful; that some of the churches were fine specimens of the florid Gothic; and that the society seemed agreeable."

"Does he live by himself?"

"He does, madam," said Walter, who was sitting at the table making a fishing-net, "and all the bwread and cheese he gets he puts upon a shelf."

"You impertinent child," said Elizabeth, laughing at this sally, "how dare you meddle with *your* remarks? Was that all he said, Dora?"

"Yes, I think so. Oh, I remember, he asked if we were going to observe the eclipse of the sun next week, and said, if we were, the best place would be that elevated field near the cemetery."

"Ah!" said Elizabeth, "how I do wish I could get some cuttings of those blue salvias! Marion, I must take you to see the cemetery."

"Do, if you please," said Marion;—"you talk so much about it that I should think it must be an interesting place."

Elizabeth laughed. "Do you remember that old lady who sat in the pew before us this morning at prayers?—an old lady in a striped knitted shawl?" she said.

"Yes, perfectly."

"Well, she's Frank Maidley's aunt."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, she has only lived here a few months, and one day Frank took her to walk in the cemetery gardens. 'And what's written on that sign-board, my dear?' she said, when they got in, for she's very shortsighted. So Frank read, 'The public are desired not to tread on the borders, not to pluck the flowers, and not to sing "Away with melancholy," in this cemetery.' 'And very right, too,' said the old lady; 'I'm sure they could not sing a more inappropriate tune.' But oh! how angry she was when she came close and found it was all his own invention! She declared she

would cut him out of her will for making game of her, and I don't believe she has ever forgiven him to this day."

"Now, Elizabeth," said Dora, "there is another knock at the door; you had better go and change your dress, or you will have to stay and entertain these visitors."

CHAPTER X.

ROSINA.

MR. BISHOP's father (one of the most sweet-tempered and simple-minded old gentlemen that ever lived) seemed to think it part of his duty to pay attention to his son's intended during his absence; and finding Marion almost always with her, soon began to include her in his kind recollection.

He was a short old gentleman, rather stout, and bald; he generally wore a long great-coat, and took very short steps; he had a pair of twinkling black eyes, expressive of the most paternal tenderness, and always called his son "my dear child," and Elizabeth "my pretty dear."

One morning Mr. Bishop had brought the two girls a pretty offering, in the shape of a fairy rose-tree in a pot, and they had taken it up-stairs to Marion's little parlour, where they were admiring its beauty, when young Greyson came in, and said,

"Elizabeth, my aunt told me to remind you of the District Meeting to-day at Mr. King's."

"How tiresome!" exclaimed Elizabeth;—"I wanted to take Marion out to-day; and now I shall have all the way to go to Mr. King's, and then to return for her."

"But cannot I go with you, and wait till the Meeting is over?" said Marion.

"Oh yes, if you will, dear Marion," said Elizabeth; "but I wonder where the district books are?"

"Rosina has got them, no doubt," observed young Greyson; "she is often going out with tracts or a little bag in her hand. I see her go past the study-window almost every day while I am at my writing."

"I thought it was Elizabeth's district?" said Marion.

"Yes, so it is," replied Elizabeth, blushing; "but really I begin to feel it too much for me. The little houses are so hot that they always give me the headache, and then the poor women have so many grievances to relate that it makes me quite low. But Rosina likes going, and besides, she keeps the books very neatly, so that I have only to make an abstract of what she has done when I have not been able to go myself."

"Which abstract runs thus," said Wilfred:—"Mrs. Black—Groats and sugar, 9d.; child has the measles; husband out of work; promised her a hat for her boy.—Mem., not to forget it. Mrs. Reeve—Very impertinent; wanted to know why

I gave so much more to her neighbours than to her; gave her child a pound of beef for tea; declined to take the tract; said she would see about it next time. Mrs. Collet's father ill; gave her tea, sugar, and sago, for him; heard him whistling before I opened the door; when I came in he began to groan audibly, and declared his cough was "killing of him." Found the Wilsons toasting muffins; did not give them anything.—Mem., not to take my gloves off there; eldest child has the ringworm."

"How came you to be so well acquainted with my district-books?" said Elizabeth, who, though she could not help laughing, had tried to stop him several times without success.

"Don't I go into the school-room whenever I like?—and don't I find Rosina poring over the accounts? Of course, I help her. You'll see my name down as a subscriber, 'W. F. Greyson, Esq., one pound a-year.' I help her, too, to cover the tracts, for I like to make myself useful. I know all about it, Elizabeth, my dear! You have not been into your district for five months. Rosina says, 'Dear Elizabeth is so kind as to let me take it for her.' She thinks it quite a treat and a privilege to have it, poor little dear! And the people are so fond of her,—they say she talks so prettily to them!"

"Well, I am sure she may have it altogether

if she likes," said Elizabeth, in a tone of pique, "for I have a great many other things to do."

"Yes, of course, and she does not like going to the meetings," said Wilfred, "which is a part you do not so much mind. She has no time for them, because all the morning she is at her lessons with Miss Woods; and then Dora's schools, which she used to be so fond of, Rosina says, 'Dora is so kind as to let her go to them when she has other things to do.' I think she goes most days to the girls'-school, to teach them arithmetic. She says they are getting on very nicely. Dora used to be wild about those schools when first they were built, but now she seldom goes to them;—she lets Rosina have that treat, as well as take her class at the Sunday-school. Mr. Dreux says she is a capital teacher."

"You seem to know all Rosina's plans," said Elizabeth, rather tartly; "perhaps you can tell me where these district-books are?"

"Yes, I will bring them," he replied, "and then I must go, for I am rather late."

When he had left the room, Elizabeth said nothing to Marion. She felt vexed that Wilfred, in his joking way, should so plainly have let her see that he thought too much was left to his favourite Rosina. However, the little girl presently came in herself, with the books in her hand,

knocking first at the door, and entering with her usual charming modesty.

"Well, Rosina," said Elizabeth, looking up with rather a heightened colour.

"I asked Miss Woods to allow me to bring the books myself, dear Elizabeth," said Rosina, "because I wanted to remind you of that dispensary ticket which you said I should have for old Larkins."

"Oh, I forgot it," said Elizabeth,— "how tiresome! Well, he must wait till next month."

Rosina looked disappointed. "And there are several subscriptions due, Elizabeth; would you mind calling to ask for them, or if I might call myself for them, with Miss Woods?"

"No," said Elizabeth, "I do not wish you to do that,—I will call for them myself; perhaps not to-day, for I am busy; but I will lend a sovereign to the district purse in the meanwhile. It is a great deal of trouble collecting those small sums."

Rosina gratefully received the sovereign, and put it into her little purse.

Elizabeth thought she had spoken rather sharply to her, so, as she gave her the money, she drew down her face and kissed her.

"Why, there is not one penny in your purse, Rosina," she said; "what a wasteful little thing you must be, to have spent all your money so soon!"

Rosina trifled with the tassels of her purse, but said nothing, and Elizabeth began to examine the books, to see how much had been spent.

"Why, Rosina," she said, "the district money will never hold out if you spend it so fast."

"Oh, but there is my own subscription," said Rosina; "I subscribe half-a-guinea a quarter."

"What! half your allowance? Well, you must do as you please about that; but *still* you are spending too much; you know you must not get my district into debt."

"But papa always gives me a sovereign on my birth-day," said Rosina, "and Mr. Raeburn said he meant to give two guineas a-year, if I would remind Marion to ask him for it."

"But how came Mr. Raeburn to know that you had anything to do with the districts and schools?"

"I don't know," said Rosina, blushing, "unless Wilfred told him."

Elizabeth coloured deeply; but whatever she might think, she said nothing. "Well, that is all," she observed, when she had finished the abstract of the month's proceedings. "You may go now, Rosina; I will not forget to ask for the ticket."

"And will you ask for a new book for your coal club?" said Rosina, lingering at the door; "the old one is quite full."

"I will see about it," said Elizabeth, in a fretted and rather ungracious tone, and Rosina withdrew.

"Now, Marion," said Elizabeth, "we had better put on our bonnets; it is quite time to go."

The District Society was a partnership concern

between Mr. Dreux and Mr. Lodge, and the subscriptions were equally divided between them.

When the two girls entered, they found twelve or more ladies already assembled, and talking with volubility on various subjects, but all in some degree tinged, as it were, with the phraseology of the Evangelical school. Marion was astonished at the ease with which they alluded to some of the most awful truths; talking of conversions, death-beds, prayer-meetings, all in a breath and without the reverence which such topics would seem to demand, and the next moment bringing in some trifling anecdote about a favourite clergyman,—mingling the whole with the gossip which always prevails in a country town. At length the two clergymen came in. Mr. Dreux was evidently in a hurry, and wished to begin the business immediately; but his colleague was instantly assailed with questions as to why he had put a stranger into his pulpit on Sunday, and pathetically requested not to do so again, various strictures and criticisms being offered on the stranger's sermon, which made Mr. Lodge laugh. He was a much more easy man to deal with than Mr. Dreux, who often appeared not to understand implied compliments, or was so reserved and dignified that it seemed taking a liberty to pay him one.

The actual business of the meeting could easily have been transacted in a quarter of an hour; but there were so many compliments, which rendered so many disqualifying speeches needful, so many

digressions, so many anecdotes related, and so many appointments to meet at different places, made before it began, that it was more than an hour before Mr. Lodge declared that his accounts were finished, and paid over the money to his colleague as treasurer, who immediately after rose, and bowing all round, took his leave with alacrity.

"Dreux is excessively busy just now," said Mr. Lodge, when he had left the room.

"Something like you in that respect, I imagine," said an elderly lady, who had shewn herself well versed in the art of flattery.

"Well, I really do sometimes wonder myself how I contrive to get on, beset as I am; I never have a moment to myself. Then there are my pupils, and I have visitors from morning to night," said Mr. Lodge, half laughing.

Marion stole a glance at him, and thought he looked none the worse for his work, whatever it might be.

"Well," said one of the most fashionably dressed among the ladies, "a minister's time is never his own. I do not see how it can be otherwise; if people are always coming to you for advice, it is no more than you ought to expect, who are so well able to give it."

"And so willing, I am sure," said another lady.

Elizabeth then rose to take leave, and Marion followed, half wondering what sort of adieu Mr. Lodge might give them, and whether he counselled

them to abstain from worshipping the creature more than the Creator ; at the same time she was surprised at the active benevolence of those ladies, who seemed to spend the greater part of their lives in doing good, visiting the sick, teaching the ignorant, and organizing clubs and provident societies. After this several days passed without any acquaintance on Marion's part with the society of Westport, but she heard Mr. Dreux preach twice, and, to her surprise, found it superior to her expectation ; its masterly earnestness astonished her, so that she felt very serious the rest of the day, and could not understand the levity of her cousins, nor approve of the way in which they spent their Sunday.

Not that they talked on absolutely secular subjects,—their conversation always bore on religious matters, more or less remotely,—but there was something so ready-made and so fluent in it ; they talked with so little feeling and so much ease, as could not fail to suggest to a stander-by the idea that they had been brought up with the understanding that they were to hold certain opinions, and possess a certain character, and they had the dialect of those who did, whether or not they were truly of their number.

Rosina was apart from the rest of the family, no less on Sunday than on other days. She was completely occupied with her Sunday-school class ; and young Greyson, who also was a teacher, escorted her there. On Sunday evening, as she had a very

bad cough, her mother desired that she would remain at home, and Marion wished to stay behind and read to her. Her cousins seemed to think it most unnecessary, but as she evidently wished it, they did not oppose her. So Marion went up stairs to her cousin's room to tell her of the arrangement. Rosina was lying on her bed, reading; she looked very poorly, and Marion persuaded her to come down to her own little parlour. "I am going to read to you," she said, "for your eyes are weak, and you must keep them closed." The little girl blushed, and did not like to give her cousin so much trouble; she, however, followed her advice, and lying down upon the couch, and putting her arm round Marion, laid her head upon her shoulder to listen. Marion read to her for some time, and she was so still that she thought she must be asleep; she put aside the book, and looking down upon her face, she opened her eyes, and Marion said, "I thought you were asleep, my sweet Rosina."

"Oh, no," replied the little girl, "I was only thinking," and then, without either affectation or bashfulness, she began to talk about the evening lessons which Marion had been reading, as if she was sure that her cousin could both understand and sympathize with her.

Marion was not slow to fall in with the strain of conversation, and they continued to converse till it was dark.

Rosina said nothing brilliant, but the childlike

sincerity and simplicity of her religion struck home to Marion's heart with a delight that she had not felt since she left her village home, and this oneness of feeling increased tenfold the affection which from the first had drawn them together, and made the time pass so swiftly, that Marion could not repress a sigh of disappointment when she heard her cousins' footsteps in the gallery.

"Is it possible the service is over?" she said, as they entered. "What a little time you seem to have been away!"

"My dear Rosina, do sit up," said Dora; "you must tire Marion very much, I am sure."

"Oh no, she does not," said Marion, preventing the little girl from rising; "do not move, my dear."

"How is your cough?" asked Elizabeth. "You should have told me, Rosina, that you were not well, and I would have taken the class myself."

"Oh, my cough's better now," was the reply; "and, besides, the last time you took it, don't you remember you said it gave you the headache?"

"Yes, I—I am rather subject to the headache," said Elizabeth, blushing, as she stooped to kiss her sister's forehead.

The next day Mr. Raeburn passed through Westport on his way home. It was evening, and he found the ladies of the family, and two or three strangers, assembled after dinner in the drawing-room. The guests were all uninteresting people (at least so Dora and Elizabeth said,—people whom

it was necessary to invite now and then), always with the bright exceptions of old Mr. Bishop, Mr. Dreux, his sister, and Frank Maidley.

The gentlemen soon entered the drawing-room, and as soon as possible Mr. Raeburn took young Greyson aside into the little study before mentioned.

The drawing-room was a spacious, old-fashioned apartment, opening by French windows into the garden, and on each side of it, and divided from it by folding-doors, was a little room about ten feet square. These two rooms (each of which was furnished with a heavy curtain, which was seldom drawn over its entrance) had merely the appearance of wings to the main room. One of them was fitted up with china, and in the other stood the harp and piano.

Into the former of these little rooms Marion and Elizabeth had retired. They were going to play a game of chess, and while the former was setting out the men, Elizabeth said to her, "Well, Marion, what do you think of him now you have seen him in a room?"

She spoke in a low voice, but it unluckily chanced that Mr. Dreux was sitting on a sofa near the entrance of the room, and hidden from them by the folds of the curtain. He was languidly listening to the conversation of one of the uninteresting people, who sat beside him, pouring her nonsensical nothings into his ears.

Marion made a movement of impatience when the question was asked, and as he turned involuntarily he caught a glimpse of the smile that played about her lips as she answered, "I shall soon begin to wish him the fate of Aristides, Elizabeth, to be banished (for a while, at least) from the conversation. I am *a little* tired of hearing about him."

Of course Mr. Dreux had no business to think the conversation related to him. He tried to give a listening ear to the talk of the old lady.

"Well, but," said Elizabeth, "I really wish to know what you think of him."

Either his hearing must, in spite of himself, have been very acute just then, or Marion must have spoken during a pause. He distinctly heard the answer, given in the softest tones of her sweet voice,—

"Think of him ! Oh, I think he was worthy of a better fate."

"Better than what ?" said Elizabeth.

"Than to be spoilt and made an idol of," said Marion, in the same subdued tones.

"Than to be spoilt !" answered Elizabeth ; "why, you don't mean to say that he is spoilt ?"

"I wish this old woman would talk louder, or let me go," thought Mr. Dreux, as he resolutely turned away. Of course he could have had no idea that they were talking of him,—at least, so he said to himself,—but he did not relish being an eaves-dropper, and they had no reason to suppose any one

was so close to them. In spite of this, his ears *would not* shut themselves—they would persist, against his will, in hearing Marion's answer, which was floated softly to him through the folds of the silken curtain.

"Considering the laudable pains people have taken to spoil him," she said, "perhaps they have not succeeded quite so well as might have been expected."

The old lady happily here came to a pause, and Mr. Dreux left her, feeling greatly dissatisfied with himself and her. "Am I spoilt, then," he thought; "is my demeanour really the worse for the flattering speeches that continually reach me? Do I show in manner or words that I *know* they make an idol of me? What a mortification! I do not care for the good opinion of *any one* person who has thought proper to flatter me; and yet their flattery in the aggregate must have done me mischief if its effects are visible to an almost stranger. Well, I am vexed. I wish Miss Greyson were not so discerning. I had rather have heard of my faults from the lips of any other person whatsoever! But, after all, why should I think they were talking of me?"

The Paton family were moderately fond of music. The two elder girls played very fairly—just well enough to entertain their visitors when music was desirable,—but neither of them sang. The gentlemen had no sooner joined them than old Mr.

Bishop demanded that the piano should be opened, and Dora and one of the uninteresting ladies played a duet by way of commencement. They had no sooner finished than he attacked Elinor, and asked her for a song. Now Elinor, though she had high spirits, and was very much at her ease in society, could not endure to sing before strangers, especially if she thought they were good judges of music. She accordingly excused herself, and offered to play instead.

"Oh, no," said the old gentleman, "we will not be put off in that way. I know you can sing like a nightingale. Come, Miss Dreux, what will you favour us with?"

"Indeed," said Elinor, "I assure you my singing is not worth hearing. I scarcely ever sing."

"All a pretence of modesty, to make it sound the sweeter when it comes," said one of the uninteresting gentlemen. "Mr. Dreux, I appeal to you; your sister sings exquisitely, does she not?"

Being thus appealed to, Mr. Dreux was obliged to confess that his sister did sing, though when he looked at her face suffused with blushes, he wished he could have withheld the fact. Elinor now felt far more uncomfortable than ever. She knew this delay would greatly raise their expectations. She began to turn over a portfolio of music which Dora handed to her, and her hand trembled visibly. Marion, who during this conversation had entered the little music-room, plainly saw the state of things,

though no one else appeared to notice it, excepting her brother, who feared that when she began to sing her voice would tremble so much as to be scarcely audible, so he sat, feeling exquisitely uncomfortable.

"I really do not see anything here that I know," said Elinor, turning over the song; "this music is far too difficult for me."

Marion, who was accustomed to sing every night, whether alone or in society, was, partly from that circumstance and partly from natural constitution, perfectly free from that miserable feeling called nervousness which very much afflicts some young ladies, and is made up of bashfulness and an over desire to please. She easily perceived Elinor's feelings, and generously wishing to relieve them, made a step forward, and producing another portfolio, said, "Or perhaps you would prefer to sing a duet?"

The grateful assent with which this proposal was met assured her that she was conferring a real benefit. Elinor felt that it was quite a different matter to sing supported by another voice. The audience could have nothing to say against it; and Marion, though she would rather not have put herself forward when not asked, felt indemnified by Elinor's evident relief. She let her choose any duet she preferred, and she fixed on some common-place air. Marion gave her a splendid accompaniment, and humoured her voice to perfection, managing her own so as not to overpower it.

Elinor had neither a powerful nor a fine voice, but its tones were sweet, and with these advantages, and the confidence inspired by feeling herself in such good hands, she sung her part extremely well, and the audience applauded both performers at its conclusion.

"After all," thought Mr. Dreux, looking at Marion's serene face, "I think I am not sorry you are so discerning. You have saved Elinor from a very ridiculous exhibition."

During the closing strain Mr. Raeburn and young Greyson returned, and entering the music-room and seeing that Marion was one of the performers, cast a look of amazement at each other. When the duet was finished Elinor withdrew, and Mr. Raeburn coming up to Marion, and looking at the title of the song, said, in a subdued voice but with infinite expression, "What rubbish is this that you have been singing, my love?"

Marion was still sitting on the music-stool, and Mr. Dreux (of whose relationship to one of the fair singers Mr. Raeburn was by no means aware) was standing beside her, having been occupied in turning over the leaves.

Marion was sure that he could not have failed to hear the remark, and as she rose she gave a gentle admonitory look to Mr. Raeburn, which was intended to silence him, and said, with a blush of uneasiness, lest her innocent little *ruse* should be discovered,

"Dear uncle, you are singular in your disapproval; our duet has had great success."

"I never heard such stuff in my life," proceeded the discomfited amateur, and Mr. Dreux went away and joined his sister, to whom Mr. Bishop was talking gaily, rallying her on her disinclination to sing, and declaring that it was only that she liked to be pressed.

"Marion's voice sounded very poor to-night," whispered Dora to her mother.

"I cannot think what was the matter with it," replied the discerning Mrs. Paton, "I never heard her sing in that style before. Perhaps she is not in voice."

At this moment Mr. Paton came in, and said to Marion, "Well, my dear, I hope you are going to favour us? I never hear any singing that delights me so much as yours."

Not wishing to sing again so soon, lest the contrast between her first and second performance should be remarked, Marion made some slight excuse, and her aunt said, "Well, then, Rosina shall play her last new piece,—where is she?"

The little girl, who, as usual, was quite in the background, came when she was desired, and played her piece remarkably well for her years, Mr. Raeburn standing by and testifying his approval.

"Rosina will play very well, I think," said young

Greyson, addressing Elinor; "her style is very pure, and she has excellent taste."

Elinor could never hope to play as well as Rosina did already, and she said so.

"Now, Marion, you will sing, my dear?" said Mrs. Paton.

Marion came up to the piano, and her brother prepared to accompany her. Mr. Raeburn chose a splendid song of Handel's for her, pointed out a passage which he said must be sung more *piano* than when she last sang it, and desired her not to dwell too much on the closing strain. It had been very evident to him, from the remarks on Rosina's playing, that there was no one present who really understood and could appreciate good music. He was sure they would not appreciate her singing, however much they might be delighted with the beauty of her voice. Such being the case, he did not much care to have her sing beyond the pleasure of hearing her himself, and he sat down to listen in a place where he could see her face.

Truly beautiful voices please all ears, however uncultivated; and on this occasion both the interesting and uninteresting people testified their delight by the most breathless silence. When she sunk her thrilling voice to the softest audible sound, in the passage which had been pointed out, she glanced rather timidly at Mr. Raeburn; and when he smiled and nodded she gathered courage, and went on triumphantly to the end.

"Oh," thought Mr. Dreux, "I see Miss Greyson is singing to Mr. Raeburn,—not to us."

The audience declared that they had not had such a treat for a long time, and protested that, though they did not know much of the science of music, they knew very well what pleased them, upon which a slight smile quivered about Marion's lips, which rather increased when old Mr. Bishop remarked, that no doubt that song of "Wise men flattering" was very fine, and so was that other Italian air, and no doubt Miss Greyson knew best, but *he* should have thought nothing would have suited her so well as a good old English ballad, such as "Alice Grey," or "The woodpecker tapping," which were very popular songs in *his* youth.

"It is very evident," thought Mr. Dreux, "that we are all mere nobodies." He had listened with far more real delight than any one else, but did not venture to commend, from the feeling that he did not quite understand what had so much enchanted him, and should not like to betray his ignorance.

Marion then left the piano to Elizabeth, and went and sat down with Mr. Raeburn in the little China-room, where they were presently joined by Mr. Dreux, Wilfred, and Dora. The rest of the party had dispersed themselves about the main drawing-room,—some playing at chess, and some amusing themselves with books and drawings.

On their entrance Dora and Mr. Dreux were still

talking of music, though at sight of Marion they dropped all reference to her particular performance.

"If there is anything that I *ever* feel inclined to quarrel with in music," said young Greyson, "it is that it agitates the feelings so much."

"It is certainly a direct appeal to the feelings," rejoined Mr. Dreux.

"And I do not like to have my feelings appealed to," said young Greyson. "I had rather be let alone, or appealed to through my reason; and though I cannot help being affected and distressed when people attack me with touching appeals, I often experience a kind of resentment against them afterwards."

Mr. Raeburn smiled, and said, "I agree with you, my boy, in not liking to have my feelings aroused,—at least, in an agitating manner. But music has a different effect upon me; I never willingly pass an evening without it,—it is both soothing and elevating."

"Most probably it is uniformly delightful to those who have studied it as a science," observed Mr. Dreux; "but us, to whom it is almost like a beautiful foreign language, as far as its structure and the means of its power are concerned, it must be regarded as holding more completely in its thrall. We receive each sensation obediently, and do not know what feeling it may arouse next. It sometimes takes us thoroughly by surprise. Among the uninitiated, a man of joyous disposition and

cheerful temper will not at all dread to hear the most pensive music, provided his sensibilities are not acute; it does not do more than gently rouse the even surface of his mind and touch his slumbering sensibility with a pleasurable excitement. But a man of an excitable temperament, strong and keen sympathies,—one, with high hopes, who has yet many regrets, will seldom dare to put himself in the way of music when these last are uppermost. His ignorance enables it to subdue him; he perceives neither the science nor its artifices, but finds himself suddenly living over again among passionate regrets which he is always trying to tranquillize, and recollections which he hoped had faded into oblivion. He resists the appeal, but not till it has had its will, and perhaps betrayed him to some before whom he would fain keep a calm face always; and betrayed to himself; moreover, unfathomed deeps which may never have been thoroughly tested yet, in their capacities either for sympathy or suffering.”

Mr. Raeburn’s face became troubled, and Marion cast a slight glance towards the speaker, which had the effect of checking him.

“I am inclined to think that music is a wilful thing,” said Dora, “and generally goes by contraries; those who are in high spirits it lowers, and those who are depressed it soothes.”

“Perhaps so,” remarked Mr. Raeburn; “human minds are often not so easily acted upon by their

like as by their contraries. In fact, I think contraries attract us all."

"One may see that in a man's choice of his friends," said Mr. Dreux; "and even of his wife."

Dora laughed, and said, "I have certainly observed that in external things. A fair man's wife has generally dark eyes. You seldom see a tall couple; or a clever man with a clever wife. And how often the most lovely, brilliant women, marry taciturn men."

"I do not know whether one might found a theory on what I must now advance," said Mr. Dreux, "but I have known more than one man of fine feelings and great sensitiveness who has preferred to marry a woman conspicuous for nothing but the repose of her character, though her sympathies might be too obtuse to admit of her thoroughly understanding or appreciating him, and though, by the face, she could fathom his thought no further than he chose to reveal it to her; because, I suppose, he was willing to give up the pleasure of being fully understood, for the sake of the soothing influence her unbroken repose would have on his own sensitiveness."

"I must say that I like to be surrounded by calm and quiet things," said Dora.

"I sometimes fancy you may form a guess as to a man's character by the pictures he hangs about on his walls," remarked Mr. Dreux, with a smile. "You find some men pleased to have before their

eyes pictures of bustle and strife and action,—battle-pieces, perhaps, or even the representations of the martyrs' legendary sufferings; other men have plenty, both of action and passion, in their own minds to make them wish to be outwardly surrounded by stillness and tranquillity."

"Then I suppose you would infer that the first man was of a sluggish disposition, and that excitement was pleasurable to him?"

"The first man *might* have some other reason for such pictures," was the reply; "but I think I could pronounce on the character of the second."

Mr. Raeburn thought this very fanciful, and Dora was surprised to hear Mr. Dreux talk so openly of his theories and imaginings,—he who generally conducted himself with such gravity and reserve, and whose opinions were so difficult to fathom.

Marion, who, not knowing him so well, saw nothing unusual in this scene, sat tranquilly looking from one speaker to the other, till, as they arose to leave the room, Mr. Raeburn said playfully to her—

"So you see, my sweet child, no person can be both calm and sensitive."

"Oh," interrupted Mr. Dreux, "I do not admit any such heretical doctrine. I only intimated (for I did not assert it) that the two things were rarely combined."

"You did not *assert* that^{*} the pictures in your study were of the tranquillizing order," said Marion;

"notwithstanding which, *I* assert it as an undoubted fact."

"Be so good as either to confirm or contradict that statement," said Mr. Raeburn.

The person thus appealed to laughed, and seemed well pleased to be the subject of such a remark; but he parried the question, and the conversation was just then brought to a close by the entrance of a servant, who told him that Miss Dreux was waiting for him.

He accordingly took his leave, rather surprised himself at the open manner in which he had been talking, but perfectly satisfied that Miss Greyson, though there was no particular appearance of penetration in her unusually serene face, knew more about him than he had incidentally unfolded that night, and this had been the idea that had made him talk. Where was the use of silence? he thought,—she had read his character through and through.

His character, in fact, was of that kind the full extent of whose *power* will always be felt by others, but the depths of whose sensitive affections will remain in the deepest secrecy to all common observers, as well as its weaker points and temptations, from the great and successful efforts made to conceal them.

The next morning the eclipse of the sun was (as Walter phrased it) to "come off." The great luminary was to rise partially eclipsed, and all the

young people had agreed that it was well worth taking a walk up-hill to see it.

Very early, indeed, Greyson and Walter were astir, invading the slumbers of the girls by violently knocking at their doors. The only two individuals who obeyed the summons were Rosina and Marion, who came down just as Frank Maidley was ringing at the bell, with the intention of going with them.

The morning was very grey and dull, and there was something falling without which Wilfred declared was not exactly rain,—he thought it was dew; so they set out, but found it had much the same effect upon their clothes as if it had been rain.

Dora and Elizabeth heard the street-door shut, congratulated themselves that they were not of the party, and then went to sleep again. They came down at the usual time, and found the hungry party enjoying their ham and eggs.

They looked unusually blooming, and the stay-at-homes had the inhumanity to hope they had had a good view of the eclipse, though they knew it had been drizzling all the morning.

The sun had risen partially eclipsed, and they had only caught a short glimpse of him, yet they declared they had enjoyed the walk very much.

“We went into a house on the hill,” said Wilfred;—“you know it, Dora, it is not yet finished. The indoor workmen were there, painting and

papering. They cleared away the shavings for us before some of the windows; but what amused me most was the curiosity of a builder's boy about it. I was behind the others, and he showed me which room they were in, and said, 'You'd better make haste, Sir!—they're all doing the eclipse there with a long tube.' I have not the slightest doubt, that whatever he might think was the matter with the sun, he firmly believed it was something that we were helping in! The workmen scarcely looked at the sun, only at us;—they thought we were concocting the eclipse up there."

"Yes," said Elizabeth, "and I should not wonder if they demand a little more rent for the house in consideration of there having been an eclipse in it."

"'Fragments of which are visible to this day,' they may assert," proceeded Wilfred; "for we left numbers of pieces of smoked glass on the chimney-piece, which they seemed to regard with some veneration;—they were Irishmen."

In the middle of the day, as Marion declared herself not at all tired, Mrs. Paton proposed to take her and Dora a drive through a beautiful park a few miles distant.

Marion, being dressed first, was sitting alone in the drawing-room, when Joshua, the stupid servant, came in, with a beautiful bouquet in his hand, which he gave to her, saying that a gentleman had left it for her.

"Mr.—Mr.—I forget his name, I'm sure," said this model footman.

"It does not matter," said Marion, holding out her hand, and not doubting they were from Frank Maidley, for they had talked a good deal about flowers that morning.

"His compliments to Miss Greyson,' Mum, he said," proceeded Joshua, first smelling the flowers with an admiring air, and then saying, with the greatest composure, "Lawk! how sweet they are!"

Marion's astonishment was great. However, she took the flowers, and remained ignorant of an important fact; for though Joshua could not recal the name, yet if Marion had encouraged his rising talents, and drawn him out, he would have characterized the gentleman as "him as preaches at Pelham's church, and dined at *our* house yesterday."

And here let it be observed, that though Mr. Dreux's church had, as tradition said, been built by a grateful inhabitant of the town some centuries before, in consideration of the fortune he had made in it, and had been called after his name, the common people generally put *St.* before it; for, indeed, no doubt Pelham was as good a saint as some others that have had churches called after them, and the name *Pelham* had got corrupted into "Plum." It was often called "Plum's Church," or "St. Plum's."

But to return to the bouquet. The cause of this offering was, that the day before, Mr. Dreux being seated between Marion and Elizabeth at dinner, they talked of a visit which they had paid that morning to an old lady in the neighbourhood, who had a most beautiful conservatory, and described their sensations, when, while mentally lamenting over the ruined appearance of their own, she said,—“I am sure I need not offer *you* any flowers, you have such nice ones at home,”—and thus had permitted them to leave her, hopeless of obtaining any.

They particularly regretted some myrtles in full flower, and a certain azure-flowering creeper, with long pendant flowers, which neither of them had seen before.

“It is very difficult not to covet sweet flowers,” Marion had said, “and even at this moment I cannot help wishing I had some of those!”

Mr. Dreux called upon the old lady next morning, perhaps scarcely acknowledging to himself why; and when he beheld the flowers, the temptation was too great for him, and he asked her point-blank to give him a bouquet.

“Well,” said the old lady, “as you are bent on having some, I suppose I must indulge you. Let me see,—which do you wish for?”

Mr. Dreux pointed out the myrtle and azure-flowering creeper.

The old lady cut some flowers of each, and said, "There, now mind you don't give that bouquet to a fair lady!"

"Why not?" asked Mr. Dreux.

"Don't you know the language of flowers? If you were to present those to a lady she would say you had tendered her your heart!"

Mr. Dreux laughed; notwithstanding which he took the offered flowers, which he carefully conveyed homewards, and, reckless of consequences, rang at the Patons' bell; and when Joshua opened the door, handed them down to him, as he sat on horseback, and desired him to give them, with his compliments, to Miss Greyson.

If he had gone in and presented them himself, like a man, there is no saying how much future uneasiness he might have been spared. But he made a great mistake. He did not like to come in and face her aunt and cousins, and he was afraid she herself might think it odd to bring her such an offering on such short acquaintance.

So he made off, and took care not to let his sister know where he had been, and what he had been about.

Marion never knew who had brought her the flowers; and the next day, when they were blooming in water in her little parlour, her cousin Elizabeth coaxed her out of them to wear at a *fête* for poor children, which was to be rather a grand

affair. The children of all the parish-schools were to meet, and be treated to a cold dinner, which was to be spread under some tents.

Mr. Dreux and Elinor were there. As his school children were figuring at the collation, he presently came up to speak to Elizabeth, who was standing, leaning on old Mr. Bishop's arm, with *his* bouquet in her hand, and he instantly recognised it. Marion was there, but she was at another table with her aunt and the rest of their party. He could not come near to her, but he particularly noticed that she had no flowers ; indeed, she and Dora were in riding-habits, ready to go out when the children's feast should be over. Mr. Dreux had therefore the choice of three suppositions respecting this celebrated bouquet ; either that Joshua had given it to the wrong lady, or that Marion had given it to Elizabeth (which supposition was not a pleasant one), or that this was not the same bouquet, but another exactly like it, which supposition he preferred.

All the *élite* of the place were there, and several of the noble families from the country round. Some of the ladies assisted in waiting on the children at dinner, and afterwards superintended the giving away of the prizes.

Mr. Dreux, with his sister and Mr. Allerton, retired early from the scene of action, for the former had, as usual, a good deal to do, and the latter kept more with him than ever since Elinor's arrival. She had made what is popularly called a complete con-

quest of him ; but like other gentlemen (as she herself had told her brother), he paid her no compliments, and his love, from the first, had made him much more quiet and grave than usual. He had never addressed a word of admiration to her, but everything she said and did pleased him ; and Elinor was beginning to be aware of that fact, though, from her unusually slender experience, she could scarcely fathom the reason.

She had perceived from the first how unusually anxious he was to possess her brother's regard,—to be important and necessary to him : her brother, unconsciously to himself, seemed to exercise a kind of fascination over him ; he felt that he did not perfectly understand him, and erroneously thought the principal affection was on his own side. She therefore *determined* to think that his pleasure in her society was only a part of the regard which he extended over everything that belonged to her brother, who, in speaking of him on the second day of her visit, had said, “ I never knew a man with such a warm heart as Allerton, and he has not a relation in the world. An only child, left an orphan in childhood, no near relations,—he was taken up by a distant cousin, handed from one school to another, his property shamefully mismanaged, and himself not kindly treated. He told me himself some time ago, that if he were to die he did not know of one individual who would go into mourning for him. Who can wonder, then, if he feels the

same affection for his few friends that other men bestow on their most endeared relatives?"

Mr. Dreux was not the only person who made a mistake about this time. For it so happened that Frank Maidley called on Wilfred that afternoon, and not finding him in the usual sitting-room, went into the little room before mentioned as being dignified with the name of a study, and sat down to wait for him. He no sooner entered than his eyes were attracted by a picture of a young girl, seated on a bank, and dressed in white, with what is usually called a shepherdess hat on her head, with a long white feather depending from it; her hands were dropped rather listlessly on her knees, and the face was turned slightly toward the shoulder, so as to look full at the spectator. "It's Marion!" he exclaimed, as he came nearer. "Dear me, how pretty! and yet it's not at all flattered."

He drew a chair, and sat down opposite to it. The eyes, with their sweet, tender expression, seemed to speak directly to his heart; and a crowd of recollections swarmed upon him, of days and times when her face had worn that tender look. Her living self had never struck him with that sudden astonishing sense of how desirable a companion she was in herself, and how sweet a girl. The soft blue eyes had become inexpressibly touching, and he was amazed to think that he had hitherto seen nothing in them to distinguish them from other eyes, beyond their colour and shape. For the first time, the thought

which Mr. Raeburn had imputed to him flashed upon his mind, and he did not at all like it when young Greyson came in and called him away.

The living original met him at the drawing-room door, and held out her hand as usual. He perceived that she was quite as charming as her portrait, and that her eyes had that same expression,—facts which he had doubted while gazing at her picture; for if it were so, he thought, I should surely have found it out before.

Marion was mindful of her brother's request, that she would not address him by his Christian name; and as she entered the drawing-room, leaving the two young men in the hall, she said, "Good morning, Mr. Maidley."


"Mr. Maidley!" repeated Frank, very much disconcerted, though he had heard her say so several times before, with perfect indifference. "How very ceremonious the air of Westport makes my friends!"

Marion looked gently at her brother, as much as to say, "You see he does not like it," and then said to Frank, with a little, not ungraceful embarrassment, and with a smile, "One must not speak too familiarly to a gentleman about to take a double first class."

"Am I to do so?" asked Frank, quite indemnified for her distant manner.

"So it is said," replied Marion; "let us hope the prediction will prove a true one."

"It shall not be my fault if it fails, *Miss Greyson*,"



said Frank, laughing. "In the meantime I do not venture, you perceive, to speak familiarly to a lady who has already achieved a double conquest."

"What does he mean?" thought Marion; but she did not ask for an explanation, and as he offered none, she took up her work, and remained no more conscious of the change in his mind than of that other change which had occasioned the gift of the flowers.

Elizabeth presently came in; she was in high spirits, and told Marion she had got a note from old Mr. Bishop, to say that he expected Fred home that very night.

Marion congratulated her, and was glad to hear that she should see him so soon.

"Yes," said Elizabeth, "and I am so glad he will be in time for our large dinner-party."

"Why, you had one yesterday," said Marion.

"Ah, that was a small affair; but this is partly in your honour, Marion. Papa thinks you ought to be introduced to some more of his friends, and Mr. Athanasius Brown and his mother are to be here. Mamma says she is quite ashamed of the length of time it is since she invited them; no party can be dull when they are present."

Fred Bishop came in the evening. He was introduced to Marion, who perceived at once that he was a gentlemanlike young man, and rather good-looking; but after some hours spent in his society, there was nothing more to be said respecting him.

He was rather silent, but evidently devoted to Elizabeth, who behaved to him with the acknowledged preference generally expected from their relative position.

Marion rather wondered at Elizabeth's choice, but she had not much time for speculation, as her uncle asked her several times to sing ; and knowing it gave him pleasure, she never thought of declining.

CHAPTER XI.

FRANK MAIDLEY MORALIZES.

NOTHING particular transpired after this for two or three days. Fred Bishop made no change in the house beyond withdrawing Elizabeth from conversing much with the other members of the family, to talk to him, and walk and ride with him.

When Marion came down on the day of the dinner-party, ready dressed for dinner, she found no one in the drawing-room but Frank Maidley and Walter, the latter of whom ran into the hall, and presently returned with a bunch of late violets in his hand, saying, "Look, Marion ; are not these pretty ?"

"Lovely," returned Marion : "do you think I might venture to adopt them ?"

"I should think you might," said Walter, "as they were brought from Fernly on purpose for you."

Marion took the violets and fastened them into her sash. She knew that Walter and old Mr. Bishop had been to Fernly that morning, and supposed the latter had brought them for her ; she therefore said,

in a grateful tone, "How kind of the dear old gentleman!"

"No," said Walter, laughing, "it was not an *old* gentleman."

"How kind of the dear boy, then!" said Marion, looking at him, and smiling.

"It was not a boy, either," said Walter, shaking his head.

"What! you are grown too proud to be called a boy. Well, I am determined to have it right. How kind of the dear *young* gentleman! Will *that* do?"

"Yes, very well," said Walter, "but it wasn't me."

Now Marion had found out that her myrtle bouquet had not come from Frank Maidley, for when she thanked him for it, he stoutly denied having sent it; in fact, he declared, with a bluntness not unusual with him, that he never should have thought of such a thing. Subsequently to this his hint about the double conquest had puzzled her, and though she could not make out who had sent the flowers, she coloured, and was silent, feeling secretly annoyed at having called the unknown "a dear young gentleman," and wishing she could find a pretext for taking them out of her sash.

Now the fact was that in their walk Mr. Bishop and Walter had overtaken Frank Maidley, and when they got into the wood Walter said, "How delighted Marion would be with these violets!" upon which the old gentleman advised him to

gather some for her, but to his lasting disgrace, he replied that he did not like stooping on a hot afternoon, and, besides, if he did gather them they would all wither before he got them home. Upon this Mr. Maidley applied himself to the work with great alacrity, groping among the leaves with his spectacles on, with an earnestness that it did one good to see. However, as he left them in his hat instead of bringing them in and giving them to her himself, he had no right to have felt piqued at her obvious annoyance, which he did notwithstanding, accusing her, mentally, of affectation in pretending not to know who the violets came from.

"Are they not pretty?" said Walter; "don't you wonder who brought them, Marion?"

"Not particularly," replied Marion coldly; "I shall find it possible to wait till you tell me."

"I dare say you would never have put them on if you *had* known," said young Maidley, in a tone of pique, as Walter left the room.

Marion looked up, surprised. "Why not?" she inquired.

He made no answer, but looked sullen.

"Perhaps you would advise me to take them off again?" she added, still thinking about her last offering, and curious to find out where they had both come from.

"I think you had better," he replied; "I am sure you put them on by mistake."

"What does he mean," thought Marion. How-

ever, she was relieved at the turn the conversation had taken, and unfastening the violets she gently tossed them towards the table near which she was sitting. If she had thrown them with a little more force they might have rested there, but as it was, they dropt over the edge and fell on to the ottoman at her feet.

"The person who brought them seems to have fallen under your displeasure," she said, after a short pause.

"Only because he is a great fool," replied young Maidley, who had no sooner made her take out the flowers than he repented it.

Marion felt much puzzled, but a slight glimmering of the truth reached her mind as she rose from her place and went to a sofa in the window.

Womanly curiosity was not to be resisted, and as Walter had left the room, she could not help saying, "After all, Mr. Maidley, I should be glad to know who gave me those flowers. Perhaps you will favour me with his name."

"How oddly Frank behaves," she thought, as he looked about him, as if he felt ashamed of himself.

"Who brought me those flowers, Mr. Maidley?"

"I did."

Marion paused for a moment, scarcely knowing what to reply, but her natural tact coming to her aid, she presently said, "I am surprised you should think so slightly of a person for whom I feel so much regard, still more so that you should hurt my

feelings by calling any friend of mine a fool. However, as you are probably the only person in the world who thinks he merits such an appellation, perhaps you will oblige me by picking up the flowers again, and bringing them here."

Frank Maidley did as he was desired, and brought the flowers with the air of a rebuked school-boy. Marion took them and reinstated them in their former place, saying, with as much composure as if she had really been speaking of some other person, "I hope you will never speak ill of my friends again, particularly of those whom I have known from my childhood."

While he stood before her quite undecided whether to feel reproved or flattered, and before he had made up his mind, a bevy of Miss Patons entered, and immediately after the dinner company began to arrive.


But neither the presence of many strangers, the necessity of talking to them, the singular traits of character displayed by some, nor, to crown all, Mr. Dreux's conversation, which was chiefly addressed to her,—not all these things could keep her from pondering on the sudden change in Frank Maidley's behaviour, and perceiving, with many uneasy sensations, what it must portend. She was still thinking on this subject, when the ladies retired to the drawing-room, and started when Elizabeth laid her hand upon her arm and asked where those beautiful violets came from.

"Come with me, dearest," she said, without awaiting the answer to her question, and leading Marion to the little wing of the drawing-room before described as the china-room; "I want to tell you something."

Marion followed her cousin, and they established themselves on a couch, with a sofa-table before it, while Elizabeth, with great animation, began to detail various particulars relative to her own prospects.

Marion did her best to seem amused, and succeeded. Elizabeth continued to talk till the increased sound of voices announced the return of the gentlemen, and immediately after, Fred Bishop drew aside the partially-drawn curtain and established himself beside Elizabeth.

He was followed instantly by the Rev. Athanasius Brown, who was in the middle of a sentence when he entered, on the subject of the prospects of the turnip crop; and if he expected Fred Bishop to answer it he must have been surprised as well as disappointed, for that gentleman seemed no longer conscious of his existence. In a few minutes Frank Maidley came into their sanctuary, and leaned his broad shoulders against the doorway. Mr. Brown, who for the last few minutes had been looking forlornly about him, searching for something to do, now espied a chess board, and inquired of Elizabeth whether he might have the pleasure of a game at chess with her.



Upon this Fred Bishop looked a good deal annoyed, and Elizabeth was about to give a reluctant consent, when Marion said, "Dear Elizabeth, you know I am the family champion!"

"O yes," said Elizabeth, looking gratefully at her, "you play so much better than I, Marion, that it will be best to leave our reputation in your hands."

"So if Mr. Brown has no objection," Marion began.

Hereupon Mr. Brown gracefully signified that it was all the same to him which of the ladies he played with, and drew a chair opposite to Marion, and began to set the men, the narrow sofa-table serving for the board to stand on.

The Rev. Athanasius Brown, whether he moved a resolution at a board of gentlemen or moved a pawn at a game of chess, was equally in earnest and equally absorbed in what he was about. After the first few moves he became perfectly abstracted from all around him, and incapable of hearing the conversation or remarking the movements of the various guests who passed in and out of their little retreat, and laughed and talked on all sides of him, while, with his brows knit and his eyes intent upon the board, he weighed all the consequences of some impending aggression on the part of his adversary, or hovered with uneasy fingers over the piece which he intended to move.

Elizabeth and Mr. Bishop could talk quite at their ease, though sitting so near the combatants: it was

quite obvious that he was utterly absorbed; and Elizabeth, as the evening wore on, felt increasingly obliged to Marion "for her obliging self-sacrifice." Mr. Bishop also remarked, quite fearlessly, that he had often heard of heroines in humble life, and he now had the pleasure of seeing one belonging to the upper classes,—one, he continued, who deserved to have kings, queens, and knights at her disposal, and to be unchecked in her progress through the game of life.

"I find a Bishop the only thing that troubles me at present," said Marion, casting an admonitory glance towards him, of which he took not the slightest notice, but waxed yet more incautious in his remarks, feeling perfectly secure in Mr. Brown's state of oblivion.

At length, after a pause of at least a quarter of an hour, he made his move, and Marion, who had had abundance of time to consider what she would do, whatever piece he advanced, moved almost instantly, and Mr. Brown relapsed into another fit of abstraction.

It was certainly not a very lively occupation playing at chess with Mr. Brown, and as the time wore on Marion began to wish for a little change. The game had lasted more than an hour when this was afforded her by the entrance of her uncle, who beckoned away Fred Bishop, and bore him off among the gentlemen who were talking in the main drawing-room. At the moment of his disappearance

Frank Maidley took his place, and Mrs. Paton came into the room, with Mrs. Brown, Wilfred, and Dora.

"Why, Marion, my dear," said her aunt, "I wondered what had become of you. What, at chess? Ah, I know you are a famous chess player."

Marion looked up and tried to seem amused, and Mrs. Brown, observing her son's abstracted air, and that he seemed quite unconscious of her presence, nodded mysteriously round, and whispered to Mrs. Paton that "she believed if you were to tell him that the Parliament itself was burnt down you would not rouse him till he had made his move."

"Dora, my dear," said her mother, "why have we had no music? Go find Rosina, and play those new duets of yours."

The obedient Dora needed no second bidding.

"Don't you think Athanasius is looking better the last few days?" said that gentleman's mother, addressing the standers-by generally.

"Oh, much better," said Frank Maidley, in a tone of the deepest interest.

"Ah, it's the country air. Dr. Tring always said he ought to have a good walk every day,—and to do the Doctor justice, I must say, Mr. Maidley, he practises what he preaches, and takes a long walk every day with Mrs. Tring. I met 'er and 'im this morning on the Fernly road; or at least I should

say, 'im and 'er. Ah, there's nothing like the country, Mr. Maidley!"

"No," replied that gentleman. "Let me wander not unseen by 'edge-row elms and 'illocks green."

Mrs. Paton turned quickly round on hearing this quotation, and looked with astonishment at young Maidley, under the impression that he had actually dared to ridicule her guest before her face, but seeing the benevolent smile that lighted up his broad, good-humoured countenance as he looked up at Mrs. Brown with an air of respectful interest, she thought she must have been mistaken, and the notes of the harp and piano beginning to sound in the distance, the two elderly ladies went away together.

"Pray take a seat," said young Maidley, looking at Wilfred. "You had better settle yourself comfortably, for we—that is, my excellent friend and myself (nodding towards Mr. Brown)—*we* have no intention of going home till morning, 'till daylight doth appear."

"You seem determined to make us acquainted with the writings of the poets," said Marion, turning towards him. "You are particularly rich in quotation this evening, Mr. Maidley."

"I'm inspired by your presence."

"I like you much better," replied Marion, "when you are not in a state of inspiration."

"I know Miss Greyson wishes me to go," said

Frank, addressing Elizabeth. "I wish I might be allowed to enjoy myself in my own peaceful way."

"Don't you think you should find the society of the gentlemen more improving than ours?" said Elizabeth, smiling. "I see papa and Mr. Ferguson talking on what seems to be a very interesting subject."

"No, I can't go to old Ferguson, for I know he would patronize me, and I hate to be patronized."

"Well, you may stay here then, provided you promise not to laugh at your betters any more."

"Which are my betters?" inquired Frank, looking round with an air of innocent bewilderment.

"Every one here present," replied Elizabeth, laughing.

"Perhaps, then, one of my betters will propose some improving theme on which we may discourse with advantage to our young minds. I do so love to hear people hold forth on virtue and morality."

"Check," said Mr. Brown, in a deep portentous voice which made them all start.

Marion moved her piece out of danger, and the conversation went on.

"After all," said Frank, "when one ridicules a good man it's not *him* or his *principles*, but merely some little oddity in his manner or appearance that one laughs at."

"Well," thought Marion, looking anxiously at

her *vis-à-vis*, "I know he does not hear, poor man ; but I wonder at their daring."

"And it does not at all lessen the respect that one feels for such a man to be able to see that in some respects he is open to ridicule ; besides, 'censure is the tax that people pay to the public for being eminent,' and so ridicule is the tax they pay for being better than their neighbours."

"Very bad morality, and I don't agree with you that it does not lessen the respect one feels for such an one."

"Besides," continued Frank, "ridicule is a kind of tacit avowal that the man has something excellent and exalted about him ; for if he were altogether a mean or commonplace character there would be nothing out of keeping in those very points which are now, in consequence of their incongruity, felt to be laughable."

"Exactly so," said Elizabeth, following on the same side. "The little blemishes of a fine character are more conspicuous than the grave faults of a common one. Think of the splendour of Dr. Johnson's genius ! and yet, because he was a great man, his putting his fingers into the sugar-basin when he went out to tea is remembered to this day, because people wondered that a man who could write a dictionary, and use so many fine words that scarcely any one else understood the meaning of, should not know how to use a pair of sugar-tongs ;

whereas, a man who only just knew how to read and write his mother tongue might have done the same thing all his life, and the world would not have taken the slightest notice."

"The more eminent a man is," said Frank, "the better target does he present for the shafts of ridicule. Ahem, I hope Miss Greyson hears that."

"I hear," replied Marion, in a tone sufficiently subdued not to interrupt Mr. Brown's cogitations; "but I think, though what you say may hold good with respect to men of genius, it does *not* with respect to men who are only eminent for piety and a desire to influence others for their good; if you make them ridiculous you take away half their power."

"Certainly," said Frank. "But we were not talking about *my* making them ridiculous, but about their making *themselves* ridiculous."

"Ah, I think if they make themselves ridiculous," said Marion in the same soft voice, "we should do our best to think charitably of them, remembering that very likely *we* are as absurd in their eyes as they in ours."

"Marion is getting very severe," said Elizabeth, undauntedly, "but let us try to think charitably of her, for she has had enough to try her temper this night."

Marion blushed deeply, from fear lest the remark should be heard by her partner, and Elizabeth happening to turn her head, saw Mr. Dreux leaning

against the doorway, apparently an amused spectator of the scene.

"Checkmate," said Mr. Brown. The event had been so long expected that when it did at last take place they were quite surprised.

"I hope you have had an interesting game," said young Maidley.

"Very much so," replied the Rev. Gentleman. "Miss Greyson plays extremely well, and I should have been very happy to have given her her revenge, but unfortunately I have an engagement at home which will oblige me to take my leave early."


Marion turned away her face to conceal a smile which she could not repress, and Mr. Brown bowed all round with his usual stiff formality, and took his leave.

"I hope you have been amused with our conversation, Mr. Dreux," said Elizabeth, turning half round.

"Very much so," he replied. "I did not agree with the speakers, but I perceived that only one of them uttered her real sentiments."

"Of course," began Elizabeth, a little abashed, "we should not *seriously* defend the practice of laughing at any good man, particularly at a clergyman."

Mr. Dreux bowed, but in a manner which seemed to express neither assent nor dissent, but simply informed her that he had heard what she said. He seemed occupied in looking at Marion, who was



putting away the chess-men, and whose face was still rather troubled, for she fancied Mr. Brown must surely have heard her cousin's last remark about her temper.

Elizabeth began several sentences relative to her not wishing to defend the practice of laughing at others, but she could not finish them; and, as Frank Maidley showed not the slightest inclination to help her, she was not sorry when Mr. Dreux joined the rest of the party in the main drawing-room.

"I wonder how all the nonsense we have been talking would look in print," said Elizabeth, in a tone of vexation.

"Luckily," said Wilfred, "there is no one present who will be likely to give it to the world. I can only say, that if I ever become sufficiently celebrated to have my biography written, I shall begin to talk in the most elegant periods possible, and always in praise of all the cardinal virtues and the discouragement of vice, and all that. I shall also fill my letters with sentences that will do me credit, and all the moral axioms I can think of; for of course I shall wish to improve my age. As for Athanasius and his mother, nobody shall ever hear *me* make game of either 'er or 'im,—or, at least, I should say, 'im or 'er." This last remark was so precisely in the old lady's voice, that they all burst out laughing.

"Yes," said Elizabeth, spitefully, "it's very well

to laugh at us. By the bye, your portrait must be in your biography, and in profile, of course, to display the proportions of your nose."

"No; I think I shall not have a portrait," replied young Greyson; "but let it be said of me,—‘He was about the middle height. We have no objection to admit that his nose was large, but otherwise he was good-looking and well-proportioned.’"

"I am afraid you scarcely reach the middle height, dear," said Marion.

"Well," said Elizabeth, "there's not the slightest chance that his biography ever will be written; but if it should be, I think they'll say, ‘rather below the middle height,—all but short.’"

"Then I won't have it written at all," was the reply.

"Come to facts," said young Maidley,—“what is your height?"

"Why, five feet nine."

"Very well, then, let that be stated, and leave the invidious world to judge for itself."

"He has a habit," said Elizabeth, "of saying of rather tall people,—‘Oh, he's a fellow about my height.’ But he never says so of any one who is even a shade shorter than himself."

"As for you, Marion," remarked Wilfred, turning the conversation, "I really should like to know what a biographer would say of you."

"He shall say whatever he pleases," said Marion.

"Let him describe her as she now appears,

beginning with—'Miss Marion Greyson was a young lady possessing moderate talents and a serene temper. At the time when this biography commences she was seated at a table with one of her accomplished cousins, who, like herself, was occupied in tossing little balls of brown braid over her fingers whereof to make watch-guards. She was arrayed in a lilac silk-gown, with flounces snapped at the edges.'

"Pinked, you Goth!" interrupted young Maidley. "Don't you know that those wriggles are called pinking?"

"Well, it's all the same thing. 'She had round the top of her dress an article which I understand is called a berthe, and round her arm a bracelet in the shape of a snake, with its head dotted with blue stones (she chiefly valued the latter because it was a present from her justly esteemed brother). Now for her face."

"The eyes good," interrupted young Maidley. "Let the biographer compare them to stars."

"He shall compare them to two blue stars on a misty night. As to her nose—I should be sorry to hurt your feelings, Marion,—but don't you think it has just a slight leaning towards the genus of pugs?"

"Nothing of the kind," said Elizabeth; "it's quite a straight nose."

"Well, I should have said it was a mild pug; but I don't wish to be contentious."

"Then we'll have her portrait put into the biography," said Elizabeth; "and if the world says it is not a Grecian nose, I shall think the worse of the world's discernment."

"Let it also be said in her favour, that she has a great respect for the Church, and never laughs at clergymen, in which respect she does *not* resemble some other young ladies whom I could mention."

"Why *will* you talk about that again?" said Elizabeth, "I am sure you might have seen that I was sorry for what I had done."


"O yes! very sorry that Mr. Dreux heard you laughing at one of your father's guests."

"Well," said Elizabeth, in a tone of levity which was not unusual with her when she was in high spirits, "then, ridiculous people, and people whose mothers cannot speak their own language properly, have no business to go into the Church. If all clergymen were like Mr. Dreux, I should never think of laughing."

"No, I am sure you would not, Elizabeth," said Marion, looking up with a smile, "for you seem quite afraid of him."

"Because he is so grave and so silent; and then he has so much dignity about him, that it's quite natural *he* should meet with respect."

"Yes, as a man he will no doubt meet with more deference than most others; but you know, Elizabeth, we ought to respect a clergyman for his work's sake."



"I can easily respect Mr. Dreux, both for his own sake and his work's; but Athanasius is very different."

"How, different?" said young Maidley. "Now I should have said that in all points that ought to command respect they were exactly alike,—they both preach the same doctrines, are each equally devoted to their work, and each equally anxious to set a good example. So far from being very different, I can see no difference at all between them."

"I admire your remonstrance, Mr. Maidley! Why, you were the principal offender in our late conversation; you did far more to make our friend appear absurd than I did."

"That's perfectly true," said the accused party; "but though I do so, that's no reason why I should approve of it. I do *not*. On the contrary, I know it's very wrong, and I am now confessing my fault, on the principle that 'he who acknowledges an error has gone half-way towards correcting it.'"

"But that proverb was never meant to apply to a case like yours. Every one present has seen you commit the fault, therefore there can be no merit in acknowledging it."

"It's impossible to please you, Miss Paton. Shall you be satisfied if I promise to call on Mr. Brown to-morrow evening and propose a game of chess with him, by way of penance?"

"I am not sure that I should," replied Elizabeth;

"but if you like to call on him, and explain how we laughed at him and his mother, and how wrong we feel that it was, I think that will quite set my mind at ease. There will be no need for you to mention names, you know, but merely say, 'Myself and one of the young ladies.'"

"No; I have too much respect for the Church to show a clergyman that his presence has been felt to be tedious. Besides, when I asked him,—'Will you forgive me for having laughed at you?'—perhaps he would answer, 'Are you sorry you did it?' And then I *might* feel it necessary to say 'Yes.' I am almost sure," continued Mr. Maidley, in a musing tone, "that I should say yes; and how very wrong that would be. It would hurt my conscience. In fact, it would be telling an untruth."

The party could not help laughing at this sally, it was so gravely uttered, and with an appearance of so much good feeling.

"I remember," said Wilfred, "that when I was a little boy I used to bite my nails, till one day Mr. Raeburn promised me that if I would leave it off, he would give me five shillings and a fishing-rod; so I began the cure by restricting myself to the little finger of each hand. Now, don't you think it would be a good plan to leave off laughing at our betters in the same way, confining ourselves strictly to one or two people, and not making jokes on any others on any pretence whatever?"

"I don't know that it would be a bad plan," said

young Maidley, "if one could keep to it. So, as Miss Paton told me that you were all my betters, I think I shall choose herself and you to be, as it were, my two little fingers, and from this time I shall laugh at you only."

"Then I hope you will at least always have a good end in view in your ridicule, Mr. Maidley," said Elizabeth.

"Yes, there will always be a good moral in my sarcasms, which I will tell you myself, in case you should not find it out. Now I am going to begin! Ahem. The absurd opinion which Miss Paton expressed—namely, that there was a great difference between the respect we owe to our two clerical friends (about whom we have been talking the whole evening)—proves, I think, that her mind is like a picture out of keeping, or as it were out of perspective. She puts together all things that go to make a clergyman in equally prominent positions; such as his piety, and his voice, and his gown, and his character, and his creed, and his bands, and his features, &c. Now this is a mistake against which I must direct my sarcasms; for it often causes her to form wrong conclusions."

"Please to observe," said Marion, "that this is invective, not sarcasm."

"It does not matter what we call it," said Frank, "if it does good. Now listen to me, Miss Paton. I am going to tell you a pretty little story, to illustrate my meaning. It is about the Church."

"Oh, I am not afraid to hear it," said Elizabeth.
"I dare say it will not shake *my* principles."

"That would be very undesirable in a lady who destines the honour of her hand to a Bishop."

"What a wretched pun, Mr. Maidley."

"Shocking: but will you hear my story?"

"Oh yes, certainly, if it is not too grave."

"Well, Miss Paton, once upon a time there was a nation of fairies, who having reached a highly civilized state, were told by a mortal who was in their confidence, that all the most refined nations of mankind professed the Christian religion.

" 'And I would strongly advise you to do so also,' said the confidante.

" 'But we have no souls,' said the fairies.


" 'Oh that does not signify at all,' replied the mortal; 'to see how a great many of my country folk go on, you would never find out that they had souls either.'

" 'Well,' said the fairies, 'then you may bring us down a bishop to-morrow, and if we like him, we'll profess your religion.'

"So the next day he brought them down a bishop, dressed in his gown and lawn sleeves, you know, and his prayer-book on an elegant cushion."

"How *can* you talk such nonsense, Mr. Maidley!"

"I find it comes as naturally as possible. Well, before he introduced the bishop to them, he muttered a spell over him, by the power of which he became as small as the fairies themselves.



“ ‘Here is my Lord Bishop,’ he said, bringing him up to the fairy King.

“ ‘But the fairies were not at all pleased with him.

“ ‘A very pretty bishop indeed!’ they said. I dare say he’s only an old worn out one that your King has done with—why, look at him, all the gilding is rubbed off his mitre!!!’

“ ‘So it is,’ said the mortal, ‘I never observed that before; but, you know, nothing human is perfect, and really in a matter of such *very* small importance—’

“ ‘Small importance!’ shrieked the Queen; ‘only hear the impudence of mankind!’

“ ‘Small importance!’ said the fairy King. ‘How dare you tell me such a falsehood! Why his mitre is the most conspicuous part of him. Take him up again directly, and if you don’t bring us down a better one to-morrow, a large gooseberry-bush shall begin to grow out of the top of your head.’

“ ‘Well, the next day the mortal presented himself again, with a very rueful countenance, for he was in a dreadful fright.

“ ‘Now,’ said the fairies, ‘have you brought us a better bishop?’

“ ‘I told you, good people,’ said the mortal (shaking very much, and looking very humble), ‘that nothing human is perfect. All of our race have some defect, and I have looked in vain for a bishop who has no blemish whatever.’

“ ‘Let us see him,’ said the King.

“ ‘So the bishop was brought in, and they all walked round and round him.

“ ‘How white his robes are!’ said one.

“ ‘And how beautiful his mitre is!’ said another.


“ ‘And what curious buckles he has in his shoes!’ said a third;—‘he looks quite perfect.’

“ ‘Now,’ said the King, ‘you have brought us down a very different bishop to-day. Understand, that the fairies are not a people to be trifled with! But if he *has* any defect let us hear it.’

“ ‘All the beginning is torn out of his Prayer-book,’ said the mortal, trembling very much, and thinking that now something dreadful would certainly be done to him.

“ ‘Is it?’ said the King, looking at the bishop with his head on one side. ‘Well, I don’t think that will matter particularly, for it does not show on the outside; and as the defect is so very trifling, you shall be forgiven this once, and nothing shall be done to you.’ ”

“ ‘A very pretty story indeed,’ said Elizabeth, “and well suited, no doubt, to my infant mind. People who are going to take high degrees are certainly very conceited. The moral is so obvious that I think I need not trouble you to tell it me!”



CHAPTER XII.

MAIDLEY'S EDIFYING CONFESSION OF HIS FAULTS.

MR. ALLERTON all this time had never allowed a day to pass without seeing Elinor, and yet he never spoke to her on any but ordinary subjects; and having never been alone with her, had not ventured to be very explicit, even in looks of admiration.

"How late you are!" said Mr. Dreux to him one evening when he entered the library;—"what can have been detaining you?"

"It was neither man, woman, nor child," replied the delinquent. "It was nothing more than the button of a wristband! Buttons and button-holes are the plagues of my life!"

"Ah!" said his friend, "when buttons won't go right, then's the time to feel the power of woman. The misery they can inflict by means of such things is astonishing!"

"The number of passions I have been put into by them," pursued Mr. Allerton, "is dreadful to think of. Why, look here,—how does my laundress

suppose I am to get a button nearly as big as a cheese-plate through a hole scarcely visible to the naked eye?"

"I don't know; my buttons are never bigger than half-crowns,—hardly so big, I should say."

"You must have been talking of something very amusing," said Elinor, as they entered the drawing-room.


"We have been inveighing against women, my dear," replied her brother. "I know we shall be late. Allerton has lost his riding-gloves and whip, my love; he says he left them here this morning, but the servants know nothing of them."

"I think Mr. Allerton took off his gloves in the verandah, and laid them on the bench, Arthur."

"You have a good memory," said her brother, going out, and presently returning with them in his hand; "women are of some use, after all."

"And my whip,—I wonder what I did with that?" said the Rector of St. Bernard's, beginning to look for it in the most improbable places; for he was very careless with his possessions, and generally laid them down wherever he happened to be standing.

Elinor, who was at work on the sofa, cast a glance here and there in search of the missing whip, and presently drew it out from behind the sofa-cushion; her brother was already at the door, when she held it out to its possessor, saying, with a smile, "Is there anything else that I can find for you, Mr. Allerton? pray have you lost anything more?"



Mr. Allerton took the whip, and said, with rather an embarrassed smile, "Why, yes, I have ; I have lost my heart. Can you tell me what has become of it, Miss Dreux ? for I think you must know."

Elinor looked up, astonished and confused ; and her brother's voice calling to Mr. Allerton from the foot of the stairs to make haste, he took his leave in a great hurry, and left her to her meditations.


It would appear that they were not altogether of a pleasing nature, for as she stooped over her work a few tears dropped from her eyes and fell upon her hands. She felt ashamed that she should have been so much taken by surprise, and alarmed as she confessed to herself how much Mr. Allerton's implied affection had for the moment delighted her. Then she was angry at her present emotion. "His remark," she argued, "was nothing but a passing compliment. If he should go abroad to-morrow, and I should never see him again, I could not blame him for those few words. He thinks it necessary to say polite things to Arthur's sister ; but if he had felt anything more than ordinary kindness for me, he would not have addressed me as he did to-day for the first and only time."

After all this reasoning, Elinor was still not satisfied ; and as she sat with her work before her, and her hands dropped upon her knees, she remembered, with a painful kind of shrinking, certain remarks, slight in themselves, but containing allusions to some of the principles she held most sacred, and which, by

an indescribably slight smile, or some peculiar tone of voice, he had contrived to show her that he held in contempt. That he was exceedingly attached to her brother she could not doubt; but in spite of his occasional efforts to conceal it, she had always seen that, though he endured to hear him speak on religion, it was only his affection that made it palatable, and prevented him from openly expressing his disapprobation.

This he had shown strongly a few days before, during one of the very few arguments they had held in her presence. As long as her brother had said, "*I think so and so*," Mr. Allerton had treated the matter in hand with gravity and respect; but on his happening to quote a remark of King's on the subject, Mr. Allerton had thrown himself back in his chair, with a burst of laughter, exclaiming, "Now, don't, Dreux; now, don't. I really cannot listen to the absurdities of the whole fraternity; and as for that wooden-legged old fellow, I always thought him one of the greatest spooneys that ever breathed."

Her brother, who did not join in the laugh at poor Mr. King, had replied, "I quoted the remark because I quite agree with Mr. King." Upon which Mr. Allerton looked at him with that curious mixture of pity and respect which he often exhibited,—pity for his supposed delusion of mind, and respect for that species of personal dignity which many fear, but none despise.



Her brother then went on with his own ideas on the subject, Mr. Allerton's face gradually becoming grave. Elinor had seen from the first that they strove with each other for the mastery, but that Mr. Allerton knew *he* should never get it. It is impossible for two minds in constant communication to preserve a strict equality; the one must give in, and as the other gains power, it must begin to bend that one, and make it revolve around it.

Mr. Allerton had brilliant talents, but he wanted tact; he lost his own advantage, and was not clever in catching at his adversary's weak point. He was equal to her brother in most respects, but he wanted his masterly energy and steadiness of principle. They were both remarkable for strength of feeling, and each had a warm temper; but the one had struggled with his temper and mastered it, while the other was the slave of his.

Elinor, who had all her brother's penetration, and a good deal of womanly tact besides, soon perceived that Mr. Allerton was playing a losing game. She also saw that the contention in which they were engaged was, with him, head work only. It was obvious that he was never disturbed with the idea of what would become of *him* if "these things were so." Their arguments, when *he* was vanquished, and admitted the fact, did not lead to any change in his proceedings; it scarcely seemed to occur to him that the matter was one which involved practical consequences.

"I'll tell you what," he one day said to his friend, "I wish I could hear you having a good tough argument with Hewly ; you'd find it rather a different thing, I fancy. He would put you in a passion before you knew what you were about."

"I don't desire the honour," was the reply, with a laugh. "One of you is enough ; besides, I like an antagonist who is sincere, and whom I can respect. I do not consider Hewly an honest man."

"You don't?"

"No, nor manly either. He has not sufficient respect either for himself or his principles to state them openly and without shuffling ; and he takes underhand means to accomplish his ends. He pretends to be very much attached to *you* before your face."

"No, he doesn't," retorted Mr. Allerton. "He does nothing but scold me, as if I were a school-boy ; he wanted me to bear him out in all his plans, and let him go whatever lengths he likes."

"Well, but I mean he *appears* to be devoted to your interests."

"To be sure, and so I suppose he is."

"He takes a singular way to prove it, then," said Dreux, deliberately, "for he does not speak so well of you behind your back as I could wish."

Mr. Allerton's sudden change of countenance made Elinor particularly attentive. He looked indignant, and coloured with mortification, as her brother, leaning forward, said, "Listen to me, my dear Allerton ;


I do not tell you this without regret; I would not willingly point out a man's failings to his friend, but I consider it a duty to tell you of this, because it makes Hewly quite unworthy of your future confidence."

Mr. Allerton changed his position, and nodded to her brother to go on. Elinor wondered how he could care for the friendship of a man like Hewly, for she had met with him *once*, and found the interview quite enough to make her fear him a little, and dislike him a good deal.

Her brother went on,—“ You know something of the Paton family and their principles, therefore, of course, it cannot be new to you that they are very much disturbed that their eldest daughter should have taken up some of your views, and wished to join herself to your congregation. Yesterday I called there: only Mrs. Paton was at home, and she said to me, ‘ I wish you would speak to my eldest daughter, Mr. Dreux; you once had considerable influence over her.’ Just then she happened to come in, with a Prayer-book in her hand; she had been to Hewly's morning prayers.

“ I immediately entered on the subject of her having in a great degree left my church, and in the course of conversation she advanced several of your opinions, and advocated them much as you do. At last she said something that I was quite certain she had never learned from you, and I answered, ‘ But Allerton does not sanction any such proceedings, nor

do I believe he would consider you right in leaving your parish church and attending his, particularly against the wishes of your parents.' 'Oh,' she said, in rather an embarrassed manner, 'but Mr. Hewly thinks it quite right, and he says Mr. Allerton is a very weak man, and I must not be too much guided by what *he* says,—for he is afraid of giving offence, and is not willing to bear the reproach of the Cross openly; he only cares about having a large congregation, and being talked of as a popular man.' At this instant she recollected that I was your friend, and stopped short, looking much vexed. I was so surprised and angry that I could not answer for a moment, and she tried to qualify what she had said. 'Hewly does Allerton gross injustice,' I answered, not in the best possible temper, 'and he knew perfectly well that there was no truth in what he then told you. But,' I went on, 'whether true or otherwise, Miss Paton, he told you this of a man for whom, in public, he professes (and you must often have heard him) the very strongest feelings of esteem, friendship, and brotherhood; therefore I submit to you—and I hope you will bear in mind what I say—that a man who is capable of such meanness as to stab his friend in the dark, to serve his own ends, is quite unworthy of your future confidence; he is either a disgrace to the principles he professes, or, if he is acting up to them, he proves them to be vile. But,' I said, as I got a little cooler, 'I do not wish to pour contempt on any principles



which you have adopted. Of course, I should be thankful if I could see you happy in the belief of those in which you have been educated ; but it is of no use my declaring to you how much *I* dislike Hewly's principles ; all I have to do is, if possible, to show that they are not worthy of *your* approval. I do not wish to argue so unfairly as to insinuate, that because Hewly has proved himself dishonest, that others professing the same belief are not likely to be honest men ; but I do say this, that your duty is now made plain. And I think, Miss Paton, as it is Allerton's church which you have attended, and Allerton's influence which first brought you there, you should at least have so much deference for the judgment of him whom you call your spiritual guide as to yield to his so-often expressed opinion, that it is an evil to leave your parish church ; and as in your case that has been done contrary to the known wish of your parents, you should retract that error, and return to your place, *at least* till Mr. Allerton shall testify his disapproval.'"

Allerton heard him to the end, and then broke out into severe expressions of disgust against his Curate, which would have been stronger still if it had not been for the presence of Elinor.

Her brother then said, "Did Miss Paton ever speak to you on the subject of attending your church?"

"Yes, several times. She asked me whether I thought she ought, and I distinctly told her no. She

began by saying that she greatly wished it; that she had had several conversations with her parents, and they strongly disapproved, but that it had ended in their saying they did not *command* her to continue to go to church with them, but they should be grieved if she did otherwise. She had then said, 'May I go to the week-day services?' and *that* they did not deny her. So I told her that her duty to her parents was always paramount, unless they desired her to do anything sinful, and that she must content herself with coming to us during the week, which she did at first, but now she frequently comes on Sunday."

"Which is Hewly's doing, of course?"

"No doubt of it; she always came with Miss Ferguson. Do you think she will come back to you?"

"I cannot tell, but I incline to think she will. She was most deeply hurt at what I said about Hewly; I could see tears in her eyes, and I wished to prolong the conversation, but one cannot do so with a lady unless she chooses to permit it. She intimated that she would give her best attention to what I had said, and then began to introduce other subjects, so I presently took my leave. Mrs. Paton had told me she did not wish to force her daughter's conscience, and thought that a proceeding more likely to do harm than good; so it is left to herself. But I was surprised at the degree of influence Hewly had obtained over her, and could not help

thinking that, though she disliked to hear me hold forth on his meanness, she was more sorry to have betrayed it thus accidentally to me, than shaken in her own exalted opinion of him."

Elinor pondered on this conversation during the evening with pain and anxiety, because it had opened her eyes more fully than ever to the fact that her brother and his friend were not only opposed in principle, but that they both fully acknowledged that it was so, and conducted their intercourse accordingly. It did not disturb her at the time to know that it was so, but she now looked back on the matter in a different light; and as she reflected on Mr. Allerton's affectionate heart, his agreeable manner to herself, his talents, and his great regard for her brother, the tears filled her eyes again, with the earnestness of her wish that it might have been otherwise.

It was quite a relief to her when at last her brother came in, and enabled her to cast off these uneasy thoughts for a while, by occupying herself with him.

"How late you are, dearest," she said, as she met him at the top of the stairs.

"Late!" he replied. "Why, I told you that I should not be home till ten."

Elinor rang for tea. "Then you walked home," she said.

"Yes; don't you remember my telling you that Allerton was going to drive me to the church where

I was to preach, and that you said the long walk home would do me a great deal of good?"

"O yes, I remember it now," said Elinor.

"What a forgetful little thing you are, my dear! what's the matter with your eyes? You have been reading in the dusk!" he exclaimed, answering his question himself. "Never do so again, Elinor, it is a most injurious habit. Why, if you had not often told me how happy you are here, I should almost have thought you had been shedding tears!"

"You know I am happier with you than anywhere else, Arthur," said Elinor, earnestly. "I wish we could always be together."

"And so we will when you are of age," said her brother; "then don't read any more in the dusk." And so saying he lifted up her face to inspect her eyes, permitting her to return to the table just in time to conceal the fact that they were filled with tears again.

"Did you call at the Patons' as you came home?" asked Elinor.

"Only at the door, I had no time to go in; the message was, that Rosina's cough was rather better—she had quite lost it till yesterday, and now it is more hollow than ever. I do not at all like the sound of it. I hope they take care of that sweet little creature."

"You really must find time to call there with me to-morrow," said Elinor; "the Patons are very polite to me, and I owe them a visit."

"I will see what can be done," replied her brother; but the next day he was very busy, and the next—the next day, to her great annoyance, the Patons called on her, with Marion and Fred Bishop, leaving her to make the best apology she could for her apparent neglect. They asked her to go with them to a certain wood in the neighbourhood, where they meant to spend the afternoon, and from the outskirts of which they would show her a very beautiful view.

Elinor gladly consented. Rosina was with them: she said her cough was much better, but she looked pale and delicate. The wood was about a mile and a-half from the town, and the path to it lay principally through wheat-fields.

It so happened that Frank Maidley had got up early that morning to enjoy a long day with the fishing-rod. His brother Peter was with him, and after breakfast they both set out with a basket of provisions and their fishing-tackle. The wood was principally on elevated ground, and sloped gradually down to the margin of the river, the ash and chesnut trees, which composed its western border, descending to its brink and overhanging it. On the opposite margin was a towing-path, but it was scarcely ever used, the river after passing through the town taking a sudden sweep in the form of a horse-shoe, and becoming so shallow and narrow, that it had been found worth while to connect the two ends of this waterloop by digging a canal across, from one

to the other; thus saving two or three miles in distance, and leaving the loop or river in a state of absolute seclusion. It was about the middle of June, and the wheat-fields on the opposite side to the wood were green and in full flower, but much too gay with red poppies and blue cornflowers to please the husbandman. Near the one-arched bridge, which led over the river into the wood, grew a fine ash-tree, its trunk for two or three feet upwards concealed by the leaves of the yellow flags among which it grew. Underneath this tree the two youths prepared to enjoy their morning's sport, and sat for several hours, talking of home, old scenes, and past fishing parties.

The day was perfectly cloudless, and the air perfectly still. The massive foliage of the wood made a pleasant resting-place for the eyes, and the soft lapse of the water had a sleepy, idle sound. The songs of the skylarks, whose nests were in the wheat-fields, were so delightful to listen to, that they gradually left off talking: their sport was not good enough to be very exciting, and as the heat of the day increased, they moved under the arch of the bridge; for it was considerably wider than the stream, and cast a broad distinct shadow, from under the shelter of which they could watch the gradual changes of light on the landscape.

Frank never went out without a small library of books and pamphlets in his pocket; he was not a very ardent fisherman, and on this occasion he laid down his rod, before noon, and took out a book

of poetry, as being more suited to his mood than the somewhat lazy sport of fishing.

Peter grumbled a little at first, but the peaceful influence of the scene stealing over him, he left off wishing to talk, and amused himself with watching the swallows, whose nests under the arch were almost within reach of his hands. The mother birds, with their bright black eyes, kept looking out at him with a suspicious air, and their mates dashed backwards and forwards, making the thick chattering noise peculiar to the swallow tribe.


The shadow of the bridge fell distinctly over the clear water. They could look down into it and see shoals of tiny fish glancing round the stems of the rushes: the chattering of jays in the wood came across to them, as an evidence that the spirit of activity and restlessness had not utterly died away out of the world. But with the sound came also the soothing notes of the wood-pigeons and cuckoos, making Peter feel so sentimental that he began to think he should like to write some poetry! and with that view had taken out the back of a letter and begun to bite the end of his pencil, when he was surprised to hear several voices near at hand, and a laugh which was familiar to him.

"The Miss Patons, I declare!" he exclaimed, "with Marion and Greyson, Mr. Bishop and Walter."

Frank hastily put away his books, and declared that nothing could be so lucky.

The two emerged from their hiding-place, and met the party of new-comers just as they reached the brink of the river. Fred Bishop was carrying two or three books under one arm, and had Elizabeth on the other.

Walter and Wilfred were lagging behind: the former looked hot and cross,—he had got a large basket to carry, which Peter was glad to see was full of strawberries. Marion, whose bonnet-strings were untied, was walking with Elinor; her face wore its usual serene expression, and she evidently enjoyed the beauty of the scene. They meant to spend the whole afternoon in the wood, and had brought the strawberries at Fred Bishop's suggestion. Dora hoped Mr. Maidley would join them, for they wanted a good reader. Wilfred wanted to make haste, for Rosina was fatigued, and he was sure she ought to sit down and rest. Walter thought it was very odd Marion should wish to come to the wood when she had so many woods at home; and how any one could wish to see a wood instead of a pin manufactory he could not think! At any rate he thought it was extremely unfair that he should have been obliged to carry all those strawberries; and, as was usual with him when he was cross, his pronunciation was more defective than ever. Frank released him of his burden, and offered his other arm to Marion. Peter was in high good humour, and ran with characteristic gallantry to fetch his own basket of provisions, to be added to the store,



assuring Dora and Rosina that it contained some sandwiches of the most delicious tongue she had ever tasted.

Thus the cavalcade proceeded into the wood; for the first hundred yards the ground sloped upwards, but when they had gained the top of this little elevation, it descended suddenly into a very deep dell, the trees being principally chesnuts and planes, and the ground free from underwood. Walter, however, objected to this place as a resting station, and proposed that they should go down deeper into the wood, where there was a slope quite covered with Muscovy violets, and where the trees were thicker overhead. There were many more birds in that dell, he said, and the last time he went through it "the blackbirds were singing like mad."

"Like what, did you say?" asked Frank.

"Well, like charity children, then, if you like that better," replied Walter, with some heat.

"In all my experience I never heard of any birds that could sing like charity children," exclaimed Frank.

"Excepting in the 'Pilgrim's Progress,'" remarked Greyson, "where the birds sing, 'He that is down need fear no fall.'"

"No, that song belongs to the shepherd-boy, who wore the herb called heart's-ease in his bosom," said Dora.

"This is the place," cried Walter, suddenly recovering his good humour, and dashing up the

bank ; " I know it by those two larch-trees, where we found the cwooss-bill's nest last year."

" What a delightful scent of violets," said Marion. " I commend your taste, Walter, as to resting-places."

" This is the only place in England," remarked Dora, as they sat down on the bank, " where Muscovy violets grow wild ; at least, so it is said."

" Yes, but I suspect the first roots must have been planted here years ago by some public-spirited individual, for you see they have only spread down as far as the spring ; it would seem as if they stopped there, for there are none on the other side."

Wilfréd was very anxious that Rosina's place should be sheltered and shady, and when she was established to his mind the other girls took off their bonnets, and Peter being mindful of their fatigues, and thinking they must want refreshment, immediately began handing a little glass of lemonade to one after the other, greatly to their amusement ; but Peter always treated the fair sex as if he thought their feet were not meant to walk with, nor their hands capable of holding anything heavier than a fan or a smelling-bottle.

Frank let him alone, and he presently began to hand round the fruit, while the girls amused themselves by decorating each other's hair with the blue cornflowers which they had gathered in the wheat-field.

"Now if we only had a flute," said Marion, "how delightful it would be."

"I really have a great mind to go and fetch mine," said young Greyson.

"What, to go back a mile and a half! Why, politeness is really uppermost to-day."

"Yes, if you will promise not to stir from this place I really will. I shall not be a quarter of an hour getting home, and I shall come back in the pony-gig, and put it up at the little inn just by here, and then, if Rosina likes she can ride home."

No one could object to his plan, so he set off with the plaudits of the assembly. He had not been gone more than ten minutes when two gentlemen were seen making their way towards them.

"It is Mr. Allerton and my brother," exclaimed Elinor, as they came nearer. "How remarkable that they should have chosen this path out of so many!"

But when the thing came to be explained there was nothing remarkable in it. Elinor, when she left home, had desired a servant to tell her brother that she was going to Fernly Wood with the Miss Patons. He happened to come in very soon, having made time to go with her to pay her call. It was very natural that he should decide to follow her, thinking it most probable that Marion was of the party. It was also very natural that Mr. Allerton, who met him in the street, should wish to go with him. And extensive as the wood was, it was far


from wonderful that they should have found the group they were in search of, for they had met Wilfred at the entrance, who had given them such minute directions as could not fail to ensure their success.

Elinor blushed deeply when she saw Mr. Allerton, who, coming up the knoll, was introduced by his friend to such of the party as were not acquainted with him, and then took his place between Dora and Elinor, while Mr. Dreux secured a seat where he could see Marion.

When people have taken a long walk on a very hot day, and have just found a delightfully cool resting-place, they are, generally speaking, not much disposed for conversation, excepting of that desultory kind which consists of passing remarks on what they have before them. Agreeably to this observation, very little was said by any one for the next half-hour, the two new-comers not taking any pains to enliven the others, who sat quietly happy, waiting for young Greyson and his flute. Mr. Allerton gathered some flowering grasses for Elinor, confining himself, however, to such as were within reach of his arm, and Marion twisted corn-flowers together, by means of the said grasses, to make a wreath for her hair.

Rosina, as usual, sat a little withdrawn, and Walter beside her. He was cutting a pop-gun out of a bit of wood with his knife.

Marion made an exquisite wreath for Elinor, and



when she had put it on, Mr. Allerton declared it was almost as lovely as the wearer. He spoke in a low tone, so that no one heard but herself, and for the moment she was pleased, but she presently lifted the wreath from her head, and asked Marion to wear it for her. Marion was a little surprised at her earnest manner, but perceiving that she really wished it, submitted very quietly to have it placed among her long silky curls. It looked extremely well in its new destination, but Mr. Allerton felt that he had received a check, and that Elinor was much less lively and open than usual.

"How quiet we are," thought Dora, "and how dull these two poor gentlemen must be. I dare say they are wishing for an excuse to get away. If I could only get Marion to sing. But I am afraid she will not."

Now it happened that some of the same thoughts had been passing through Marion's mind, for though extremely happy herself, she had an idea that their two new friends could scarcely feel so well content as they looked, knowing how remarkably active and energetic they both were. As for Mr. Dreux, the fact was, that, besides the pleasure of being in Marion's society, he was luxuriating in the unwonted bliss of an idle hour. Leisure was a thing he knew so little of that he regarded those who possessed it with somewhat of the same interest with which one looks upon the lives of the normal tribes. There was from its very rarity quite a

spice of romance in reclining on mossy grass in a wood, and having nothing particular to do.

"Marion," Dora ventured to say, "would you favour us with a duet? You have taught Walter several, and it would be delightful to us to hear one now."

Marion consented with her usual tranquillity, and Walter said he did not mind singing if Marion would beat time for him.

"No, young man; that's rather too much to expect," said Mr. Allerton. "Look at me—I'll beat time for you with this little bough of alder."

"I know I shall laugh," said Walter. "What are we to sing, Marion?"

"Suppose we begin with 'Come, ever-smiling liberty!'" said Marion; "you know that duet perfectly."

"Then you must look at me exactly when I am to say 'come.'"

Marion smiled, and began. Her thrilling voice sounded better without the accompaniment, and Walter, who had a considerable taste for music, forgot everything but the anxiety to do his part aright, for he was exceedingly proud of being thought able to take a part with her. He had a very sweet child's voice, and the defect in his pronunciation was less observable in singing than in speaking.

Mr. Allerton had never heard Marion sing before, and his earnest delight, which he expressed

with characteristic energy, brought a pang to Elinor's heart, which was not unmixed with self-reproach. She could no longer conceal from herself how desirous she was of his good opinion, and of how much importance he was to her.

They asked Marion to sing again, and she did so with perfect ease and grace, receiving the thanks of her hearers in a manner which marked her own pleasure in being able to please. In answer to a question of Mr. Allerton's, as to whether she did not feel very proud of her voice, she laughed, and said, "I often feel very grateful for it; it makes up to me in some degree for the want of conversational powers; besides, it always pleases my uncle."

"And what may you be pleased to mean by conversational powers, Miss Greyson?" he replied. "I don't like to hear ladies hold forth on law, physic, and divinity. But perhaps you mean those delightful conferences which we men often overhear between ladies, as to their knitting and crotchet work,—I think that's what they call it. Dear me! the quantity of talk I have heard about worsted work and lace work has often made me wish the fair creatures had no conversational powers! Why, you have paid yourself the highest possible compliment."

"I had no such intention," said Marion, with a gentle smile.

"Here comes Wilfred," cried Walter, dashing down the slope to meet him.

"But he is not alone; I see some other people behind the trees," exclaimed Elizabeth, in a tone of vexation. "Oh, how provoking! Actually Mrs. Brown and her son!"


Mr. Allerton's look of amazement on hearing this was not lost on Dora, who cast a glance at her sister expressive of her wish that she would be more cautious.

Greyson came walking up the slope, looking at his cousin Elizabeth with steady gravity, while old Mrs. Brown, leaning on his arm, panted up, and her son followed, looking as discontented as ever.

"And how do you do, ladies and gentlemen?" said Mrs. Brown, with a countenance redolent of good humour and heat. "Very kind of Mr. Wilfred, I am sure; he met me and my son on the road, and told us where you was, and, in short, he took us up, and brought us on in the pony-gig."

"And very kind of you to join us, I'm sure, Mrs. Brown," said Frank, casting a peculiar look at young Greyson. "How pleasing are these little social *réunions!*"

Wilfred with his disengaged hand was holding a small hamper, out of which they speedily unpacked a cold fowl, a loaf of bread, some cake, wine, and water, and plates, besides the flute and music-books,—for young Greyson had represented to his aunt that they would like to stay two or three hours more, and she knew they had left home before luncheon.



Wilfred and Frank began to busy themselves in distributing this refreshment to the assembly. Mr. Athanasius Brown seated himself as near Mr. Dreux as he could, for he had a dim idea that something like ridicule often mingled with the smiles of these elegant young ladies, and fancied that he should do well to get under Mr. Dreux's protection. But being a restless little man, and not feeling quite at his ease, he had no sooner demolished his cake and strawberries than he got up and wandered away in search of ferns. He was no sooner out of sight and hearing than Frank Maidley signified to Marion that he intended to draw Mrs. Brown out, and would not stop till he had made her laugh; in pursuance of which object he came and sat next that worthy matron.

Marion immediately turned away, and began resolutely to talk to Mr. Dreux,—that gentleman not feeling so much flattered by the attention as he might have done, if he had not distinctly seen that she was determined not to lend any sanction to the conduct of Elizabeth and Frank.

"So you don't understand philosophy, Mum," she heard Frank say during a pause.

"No, I don't, Mr. Maidley," replied the good woman, "at least not that I know of, for really things are called by such fine names now-a-days that one can scarcely tell what one knows and what one doesn't know."

Mr. Dreux kept his countenance, and made some remark, but Marion could not answer.

"Exactly so, Mum," proceeded Frank. "As the immortal Newton says—you've heard of Newton, of course, ma'am?—he was a very great philosopher. Have you read any of his works?"

"Yes, I 'ave, Mr. Maidley," replied Mrs. Brown, complacently, "but I was not aware that he was a philosopher. Dear me, what things people do find out. You mean 'im that used to preach at St. Mary Woolnoth?"

"To be sure, to be sure," replied Frank, after a moment of perplexity. "Newton was a very great man. 'Ah, Diamond, Diamond, thou little knowest what mischief,' &c. You know that little anecdote of course, Mrs. Brown?"

"Can't say I do, Sir."

"Read his 'Principia?'" inquired Frank, coolly.

"No, I've not, Sir; but I've read a good many of his writings. I've read his 'Cardiphonia.' Principia is Latin for principle, I suppose?"

"You've exactly hit it, Mum; that's just what it does mean. Well, he was one of the greatest philosophers that ever lived."

"Only to think!" said Mrs. Brown, "and I'm sure I never knew it when I read his works."

Frank Maidley by this time being in excellent spirits, now began to impart some still more extraordinary pieces of information to Mrs. Brown, and

the party were edified with the singular opinions she expressed in reply. Mr. Allerton no sooner perceived what was going on than he leant his hand to this good work with a diligence worthy (to use a common remark) of a better cause, and between them they contrived to make the old lady so perfectly absurd, that even Marion could not help joining in the laugh, though it annoyed her to be compelled to do so.

Frank Maidley had begun in apparently the sweetest spirit of humility to confess his faults to Mrs. Brown, and also to ask her advice about his studies, upon which the unconscious and gratified victim favoured them with a wonderful amount of valuable information as to how Athanasius used to go on when he was at College, and the advice she used to give him on his health and morals. "For you know," she said, appealing to the assembly, "he was but a lad, about Mr. Greyson's age, as I should judge, and it's a lucky thing he had me to advise him, for, dear me, he knew no more of the world—in short he'd never been to London."

Frank Maidley listened to all this without relaxing from the usual benevolent smile that played about his lips, and reclining his lengthy limbs upon the grass, gazed at the worthy matron as with laudable zeal she began to favour him with many a moral maxim that he might have attended to with advantage, but instead of which he looked up with an

air of respectful deference, mingled with admiration at the excellence of her sentiments.


Going on with the catalogue of his faults, and willing to show how far he dare go, Frank presently said with a sigh, "I have such a sad habit of making game of people, Mrs. Brown, you can't think how I reproach myself for it afterwards; but it grows upon me. If you could hear me sometimes you would be quite shocked."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Brown, in a tone of condolence, "that's a bad habit, Mr. Maidley; it's a great pity when people give way to it."

"So it is," said Frank, "but it's so strong upon me, that even if *you* were to say or do anything absurd I couldn't help laughing at you."

Mrs. Brown seemed to have difficulty in believing this, but Frank assured her it was a fact. "I say if you were to behave in a ridiculous way (though of course you never do), but if you were, I could not help laughing at you."

"Why, of course. I understand you, Mr. Maidley," said Mrs. Brown in a complacent tone; "but as I often say to my son, depend upon it, Athanasius, there's nothing so absurd as a person pretending to be what they are not. Why, my dear, I often say when he talks about it, why can't you let me alone? I behave in a very proper manner, and if I was to pretend to the breeding of a lady I should only make myself ridiculous; but as



it is, I say to 'im, there's nothing ridiculous in me, and it must be your mistake that the ladies and gentlemen laugh at me."

"What does she mean?" thought Elizabeth, colouring, and exchanging a glance with Frank.

"Laugh at *you*, Mrs. Brown!" said Frank, looking at her, apparently quite aghast.

"Ah, you may well be surprised, Mr. Maidley. Only to think of his taking such a fancy. But (sinking her voice) Athanasius thinks a great deal of these sort of things. Why, my dear, I say to him, if my breeding was thought not good enough for gentlepeople's society I should not be invited to go and see them. Why, bless me, I often say, do you think, my dear, that people of quality would invite anybody to their houses on purpose to make game of them? That would be a downright breach of hospitality."

"To be sure," said Frank, a little abashed. "But what made him think of such a thing, Mrs. Brown?"

The colour mounted to Elizabeth's temples, when the unsuspecting old lady replied,—

"Well, I can't justly say, Mr. Maidley, but somehow he does think so. It was only the other night—was it last night?—no, I think it was the night of Mrs. Paton's party—well, however, he said to me, 'Mother, we should 'ave been a great deal 'appier if we'd kept in our own sphere.'"

Elizabeth and Marion both blushed to their temples as they exchanged a glance with Frank

Maidley, which seemed to say, "So, then, Mr. What's-his-name Brown was not so oblivious as we thought him, after all."

But Mr. Allerton, who could not understand this by-play, seemed inclined to go on with the conversation, and had already got it back to the confession of faults and foibles, when Marion, quite hurt and ashamed, started up hastily, and looked as if she would have liked to walk away, if she had not been afraid of losing herself among the trees.

Mr. Dreux easily perceived her wish, and, rising, offered his arm, at the same time inquiring whether Rosina would not accompany them in a walk through the more open parts of the wood.

Marion's face was coloured with a soft carnation, and her eyes filled with tears of vexation. Mr. Dreux said nothing for the first few minutes, but as they got further away from the party she recovered her spirits, and they began to converse on various subjects, Marion saying that this wood reminded her of one in the neighbourhood of Norland House, where she very often went when at home.

"And in that wood I believe I once had the pleasure of seeing you, Miss Greyson—at least I imagine it must have been you," said Mr. Dreux; "but I dare say you do not remember it."

Marion admitted that she did not.

"I was quite a boy," he proceeded, "and was staying with my uncle, Colonel Norland, when one day, as I was nutting in the wood I saw a little girl

riding on a grey pony ; she had a broad leghorn hat on her head, with some long white feathers in it. Since I have seen you here I have often thought that little girl must have been you, the more so as Mr. Raeburn was holding the bridle of the pony."

"Yes, I think it must have been," said Marion, "but I do not remember seeing any youth whom I could imagine had grown up into Mr. Dreux in those woods ; most of the boys who frequent them are truants from my uncle's schools, or the children of farmers round, who go there for nests or nuts."

They had now reached the top of the rising ground, which was covered with fern, thick grass, and heath. A good many trees had been felled in this particular locality, and seated on one of them was Mr. Athanasius Brown, with a book in his hand.

When they saw him Mr. Dreux said to Marion, "It must be of course quite evident to you, Miss Greyson, that some of the conversation of a few nights past must have been overheard by Mr. Brown. If you are inclined to show him some little politeness now I think it might gratify him. He is a man of very quick feelings."

Marion and Rosina gladly assented, and they went up and joined Mr. Brown upon his tree, which commanded a delightful view of the still green wood, under whose trees the sunbeams dropped in tiny fractions, broken by the leaves, and quivering as they wavered in the light air.

Mr. Dreux helped the young ladies to begin a conversation, which was very stiff at first, but he dexterously led it to a subject on which he knew the Reverend Gentleman felt an interest, and then they got on extremely well, and found that Mr. Brown was anything but a stupid man, very well informed, and by no means wanting in either inclination or ability to defend his own opinions.

At length, after half an hour's conversation, during which Marion displayed so much tact that Mr. Dreux was more than ever amused at her lamentations for the want of conversational powers, she rose to join her cousins ; and Mr. Brown, who had nearly lost his stiffness of manner and a good deal of his awkwardness, offered his arm to Rosina, and discoursed on their way back with all possible politeness.

Their return was the signal for breaking up the party. There had been a good deal of singing and flute-playing, but the girls began to look rather weary, and Dora, perceiving that the thing grew flat, began to thank those who might be considered their guests for their company, and inquire who would like to ride home, and where they should agree to separate.

Mrs. Brown, in the kindness of her heart, pressed Mr. and Miss Dreux and Mr. Allerton to come on to the farm, and take a substantial tea with Athanasius and 'er. Mr. Dreux, having a leisure evening, accepted. Mr. Allerton's agreement followed, as a

matter of course. The host was secretly much delighted; and Mrs. Brown bore them off, taking a brilliant leave of the Miss Patons, and thanking Frank Maidley for his obliging conversation.

The Maidleys then said they must go home by the river, for they had left some line and part of their fishing-tackle hidden in a clump of yews. So it was agreed that Walter should drive Rosina back in the pony-gig, and that the others should walk home through the fields.

"I do hope that old lady will not remember enough of what we talked about to-day to give her son a connected account of it," said Elizabeth, in a tone of the deepest vexation. "I had not the most distant idea that he knew we laughed at him."

"If she remembers anything, I hope it will be what Mr. Allerton said," remarked Fred Bishop, "for that *we* have nothing to do with."

Fred Bishop himself had not had much to do with the matter beyond enjoying the jokes of the others, who now seemed rather out of spirits, and walked without any further conversation till they were clear of the wood and had crossed the bridge into the fields.

"What a fine, handsome man that Mr. Allerton is, Dora," said Elizabeth. "Did you observe what a face he made when Mrs. Brown asked him whether it was true that clergymen '*of his persuasion*' thought it undesirable to marry?"

"Yes, I observed him," replied Dora, who had included in her observation a glance which he cast towards Elinor, as if he thought it would be the most desirable thing in the world to marry if she were the bride.

"I know Mr. Hewly thinks it wrong for priests to marry," said Fred Bishop. "I remember his writing a pamphlet in which he advanced that and some other of his nonsensical opinions."

"Mr. Hewly does not think so now," said Dora, hastily; "I believe he has changed his opinion on that point."

Elizabeth and Marion looked at each other, and a dead pause succeeded to the conversation.

Dora presently observed it, and immediately made some slight observation on the beauty of the wheat through which they were passing. Nobody answered. She was nettled, and asked why they were so silent.

"Dear me," said young Greyson, pretending to wake up from his reverie, with a great start, "were we silent, Dora? I beg your pardon. It was very inconsiderate of us. 'The wheat is very fine,' I think you said. Yes, it is a very fine crop; I don't know that I ever saw a finer. When people make awkward little mistakes you should never appear to notice it," he continued, addressing the others in a loud whisper. "Yes, Dora, it is a remarkably fine crop. Now, why don't *you* say something, Elizabeth?"

Being thus appealed to, Elizabeth said: "It's a remarkably fine day."

"So it is," echoed Fred Bishop.

"There, now we are getting on beautifully," proceeded Greyson. "Marion, what are you laughing at? You needn't hold your handkerchief to your face, for I'm certain you're laughing. I say, Dora, this wheat's fuller of poppies than any I ever saw. Dear me, how very awkward!—what can you all be laughing at? I should not wonder if it's ready for the sickle in a month, Dora."

"In a fortnight," said Fred Bishop, who now really wished to let the matter drop.

Marion then put in a remark, and among them they contrived to keep up a conversation, now and then venturing to put a question to Dora, and receiving a very tart answer. So that it was quite a relief when they got home and could separate to dress for what was called in the family a tea-dinner, Mr. and Mrs. Paton having dined in their absence.

A few evenings after this Wilfred remained in the drawing-room after Mrs. Paton and the ladies of the family had withdrawn, and, setting down his candlestick, said to his uncle,—“Were you aware, Sir, that Mr. Hewly always escorts Dora home after the daily morning service?”

Mr. Paton lifted up his head in surprise, and desired him to repeat what he had said.

“Does he, indeed?” said Mr. Paton, deliberately. “And pray how do you happen to know it?”

"Why, you know, uncle, the shortest way from here to Mr. Lodge's is down Horsemonger-lane,—a very quiet lane. I go down there often, and meet Mr. Hewly walking along it with Dora till it joins this street."

"Very well, my boy. Have you anything further to communicate?"

"Nothing, uncle."


"Then I will not detain you."

It ought here to be observed, that Dora was rather in a different position to the younger daughters of the family, as she had an independent fortune, which had been left to her by her god-mother; and though Mr. Paton was supposed to be rich, he had an expensive family, and it was always said that he meant to make a great difference in favour of his son.

The next day, just at the time when he thought Dora would be coming from church, her father took up his hat, and, walking leisurely down the lane before mentioned, he met Dora and a strange gentleman with her.

Dora started, but stopped, and with a grace peculiar to her introduced Mr. Hewly. Her father took off his hat, as if he thought nothing of it, passed on, and, taking the first turning, came back to his own house.

When he came in he asked no questions, and the affair passed off without remark; but the next day Mr. Paton met them again in the lane, bowed, and



passed on. The third day he did the same thing. And the fourth, as Dora was coming out at the church-door, she found her father's footman, waiting to escort her home (not Joshua, but the old servant who had been long in the family).

"Is it possible that my father thinks it necessary to have me watched?" thought Dora, blushing, and inwardly hoping that Mr. Hewly would not offer to accompany her, as he must know her father had some motive for meeting her daily.

The servant, who had been waiting in the porch, touched his hat, and said, "Master sent me, ma'am, because he thought the town would be rather noisy to-day after the cattle-market."

Dora set out, and Mr. Hewly did not follow. Perhaps he had heard the colloquy with the servant.

When she got in she quite expected to be sent for to her father's room, but no notice was taken. And the next morning she did not go to morning service. The following morning it rained, and in her inmost heart she was glad of the excuse for keeping away.

The morning after this her father, to whom all the letters were generally taken, and distributed by him to their owners, when he had selected his own, came into the drawing-room, where the girls were sitting, and gave a letter to her, saying, quietly,—
"Dora, my love, this letter, I believe, is for you."

She thought he looked at her attentively as he

gave it. She saw at a glance that it was a West-port letter, and took it out of the room to read it in quiet.

In less than half an hour she knocked at her father's door and brought the letter in to him.

"Well, my dear?" he said, as she gave it into his hand.

"I thought I ought to show you this, papa," said Dora, colouring.

"Very well; put it down. Have you anything else to say to me, my dear?"

"Not if you are busy, papa."

"I shall be at liberty in ten minutes. Sit down, my dear."

Dora did so, and her father calmly wrote on at his own letters. She knew he had given her these few minutes to consider what she had to say; and when he looked up and remarked that now he was quite at liberty, she said,—“I wished to tell you, papa, that I am sorry I have permitted Mr. Hewly to walk home with me so often, unknown to you.”

Mr. Paton bowed. He generally preserved a certain air of politeness even in talking to his own daughters.

"I am the more sorry, papa," Dora went on, "because you have always been so extremely kind and indulgent to me, and have never seemed afraid to trust me."

Here she stopped.

"Is that *all*, my dear?" asked her father.



"And I have brought this letter," Dora proceeded, "for you to do whatever you please with it, entirely as you think proper."

Mr. Paton opened the letter. Dora felt that she had rather not be present while he read it; and as she rose to leave the room her father kissed her. He seemed pleased with her apology, but he said nothing further, and, having opened the door for her, permitted her to leave him. Having read over the letter five or six times, he buttoned it up in his pocket and walked, not to Hewly's house, but to Mr. Allerton's. That gentleman was writing, when Mr. Paton was shown into his study and observed, with his usual stately but always courteous manner, that he was come on particular business. Such being the case, Mr. Allerton was a little startled when, on a letter being handed over to him, with a request that he would read it, he observed that it was in Hewly's handwriting, and that it began, "Ever dearest Miss Paton."

When he had finished it, he folded it up and laid it down with an appearance of considerable contempt.

"Well, Sir," said Mr. Paton, "may I be favoured with your opinion on that piece of composition?"

"If you wish for my opinion, Sir," said Mr. Allerton, turning very red, and speaking with uncompromising firmness, "I think it is a mean, shuffling, despicable letter; quite unworthy the writing of any man calling himself a gentleman. I

do not at all wonder that it should have been at once given up to you. A young lady of Miss Paton's pretensions is not much in the habit of being addressed in this style, I should imagine."

"I am glad you concur with me, Sir," said Mr. Paton. "You may perhaps think it strange that I should come to you for advice and information in this affair."

"Not at all,—not at all," interrupted Mr. Allerton. "I shall be happy to answer any questions you choose to ask."

The old gentleman bowed, and said, "In the first place, then, I must inform you, that it is by no means thought probable in this place that *my* daughters will be portionless; independently of which, Miss Paton has a fortune of her own,—eleven thousand pounds. I am, therefore, particularly anxious that my eldest daughter should marry a man who loves her for her own sake, not a mere adventurer, to whom her fortune may be an inducement. Now I ask you as a gentleman, to tell me whether Mr. Hewly is, in your opinion, a proper man, in point of morals, family, fortune, and amiability, to marry a lady whose honest uprightness of mind has not suffered, I hope, from his teaching, who possesses a good fortune, is of respectable, I may say, of ancient family,—who has never been used to anything but indulgence, and is by far too gentle to assert her own rights?"

"If she were my daughter, Sir," said Mr. Aller-

ton, striking his hand on the table, as he often did when he was heated, "I'd as soon see her throw herself away on any sharper in the town as on Mr. Hewly, my curate. It's the height of presumption in him to aspire to Miss Paton's hand;—he is no more deserving of her, in point of amiability, or fortune, or position, or anything else ——"

"But as to that," interrupted Mr. Paton, "I shall be very glad if you can tell me whether this letter contains an offer of marriage *or not*? It is expressed with such extraordinary ingenuity, that it is next thing to impossible to say. It implies much love and admiration;—the writer wishes he could be always with my daughter. He then goes on to express a hope that his society is not distasteful to her,—a sigh that he is not more worthy of her. Finally, he hopes she will consider what he has said, and not too hastily reject him. Reject him, Sir! why how can a woman reject what has never been fairly offered to her acceptance? At the first reading it seems impossible that any man in his senses could look upon that letter in any other light than as an offer; but I confess that the religious advice and counsel is so singularly blended with it, that if my daughter were to answer it by a decided negative, it would not at all surprise me if he were to reply that she had mistaken his meaning,—he only meant to offer her spiritual counsel! I think very meanly of the man, Mr. Allerton,—I disapprove of his principles; but as my daughter

has adopted them, I would not have opposed her marrying a man who professed them provided he was suitable in other respects."

"If Hewly is suitable, Sir," said Mr. Allerton, "the suitability must be consistent with his having written a mean, shuffling letter; with his being the son of a village butcher; with his having no fortune but his curacy!—that *I* know of; and with his having violently inveighed against matrimony till within the last three months."

"That is sufficient, Sir," said Mr. Paton. "You remarked that your curate was no way deserving my daughter. Now, in case she *may* feel inclined to favour his suit (which, however, I do not expect), there is still one ground on which it may prove that they are equal,—I mean, regard for each other. Have you reason to suppose that his regard for my daughter, though recent, is sincere? or if you have any reasons to entertain a contrary supposition, will you favour me with them?"

Mr. Allerton reddened; he felt what mischief he was doing to his cause by speaking so meanly of one of its chief advocates before Mr. Paton. "I have often heard Hewly speak of your daughter, but oftener still of her fortune," he replied. "He does not appear to me to entertain a very exalted opinion of her understanding,—indeed he showed that by his proposition of this morning; *but* I have also reason to think he makes himself agreeable in other quarters,—that, in short, he aspires 'to have

two strings to his bow.' So that, I fancy, if he is disappointed here, I could name a lady whom he expects to find more willing. Is that enough, Sir?"

"Quite enough," said the old gentleman. "Will you favour me with his address?"

Mr. Allerton did so, and he wrote it down, saying, "I shall write and desire Mr. Hewly to call upon me this evening, and you may depend on my not giving the slightest hint as to whence my information came."

"Indeed, I beg you will not think of such a thing!" exclaimed Allerton, hastily; "I should scorn to speak thus of him and not to have him know it. I beg you will tell him that you got your information from me; that I expressed to you that I thought his letter mean and shuffling; and that I said I believed he was trying to make himself agreeable in other quarters."

And now, thought Allerton, when his guest was gone, Hewly will come to me to demand an explanation; we shall have a regular quarrel, and I shall get rid of him. Of course he will throw up his curacy, and never again, as long as I live, will I make an engagement, as I did with him, for two years!"

Mr. Paton had told him that in the evening he should have an interview with the delinquent. Accordingly the Rector of St. Bernard's sat at home, from hour to hour hoping that he should

hear Hewly's knock at the door,—that they should have a rupture, and a final parting. In this idea he was mistaken,—Mr. Hewly never came. And the next morning, it being his own turn to read prayers, he saw nothing of his curate. He soon after walked on to his house, but the servant said Mr. Hewly was gone out, and she did not know when he would be home.

Perhaps he acted on the remembrance, that

“The wise will let his anger cool,
At least before 'tis night;”

and was carefully cooling *his* before he went to his Rector; or perhaps he knew his man so well as to be certain that he longed for a good ground for a quarrel, and knowing that his anger would soon evaporate, in spite of himself, was resolved to wear it out.

At eight o'clock the next evening he called on his Rector. His manner was perfectly calm and very pensive. He took great care not to rouse Mr. Allerton; but after a while, said mildly, that he had been deeply hurt at something which had been communicated to him an evening or two ago, but that he wished to cherish a forgiving spirit, in consideration of their long friendship, &c., &c.; and as Allerton made no reply, while he sat determined not to quarrel, and looking as meek as a lamb, he concluded by murmuring a few words of pardon, and holding out his hand.

Nothing was farther from his Rector's wishes

than to be forgiven. He was astonished. He was certain Hewly must have some special motive for trying to ward off an outbreak. He tried very hard to work himself up into a passion, but could not manage it; and when he was cool he did not know how to say severe things to any one.

Hewly observed that his offered hand was scarcely touched, and that his Rector and late friend looked on him with smiling contempt. Notwithstanding which, he introduced another topic of conversation; and after several expressions of regard and forgiveness, took his leave, having conducted the interview so admirably that there had been no outbreak at all.

As soon as this unsatisfactory visit was over, Mr. Allerton put on his hat and went to see Mr. Dreux, related the whole affair to him, and inveighed against Hewly's art in not giving him an opportunity to say a single irritating thing. "So now I am tied to him for another year!" he exclaimed, in a rueful voice;—"I declare it is scarcely endurable."

"Yes, it must be highly unsatisfactory to work with a man whom you cannot respect."

"I declare I am sometimes inclined to throw up the living. Why should I be tormented with his whims, and his company?"

"Have you heard anything further of the affair between him and Miss Paton?" inquired his friend, diverging a little from the matter under discussion, as he often did when Allerton got irritated.

"Not a word, but Miss Paton has not been to morning service for several days. By the bye, here's this book of yours, 'The Force of Truth.'"

"Have you read it?"

"Why, yes, I did, as you wished it. The author, Dreux, is of the same school as that Newton who preached at St. Mary Woolnoth,—quite a philosopher of that style. Ah! that was a pretty little scene in the wood, Dreux!—your religious young people shone on that occasion. I'm glad they got a fright, though; to be candid, I helped as well as I could; and I think, after you were gone, the old lady began to perceive their sarcasms."

"I was extremely hurt at their conduct. I certainly should have told them of their fault if I had not been afraid of letting Mrs. Brown know they were ridiculing her."

"I thought some of them seemed annoyed," replied Mr. Allerton. "To do him justice, young Greyson was very silent, and as for his sister, she was evidently quite ashamed. What an elegant girl!—she is a perfect lady."

Mr. Dreux admitted the fact.

"Very lovely too," proceeded Mr. Allerton; "but I don't care for beauty. I'm no connoisseur in it, but I admire that finished grace." (Elinor, by the way, had no pretensions to beauty.) Mr. Allerton went on, not at all aware how much he was disconcerting his friend: "There is something in the courtesy of a perfect lady, and her tranquil

ease, which charms me very much, I confess." (Elinor had charming manners, and did the honours of her brother's table with remarkable propriety.)

"Then," said Mr. Dreux, perversely thinking of any person but the right one, "in my opinion, unless you're suited already, Allerton, you'd better see whether a letter from you would not do better in the Paton family than the celebrated epistle from Hewly; for I think I have heard you remark before that you did not know a more elegant and lady-like girl than Miss Paton."

This observation put an effectual stop to the conversation. Mr. Allerton was so grave for some time after, that his friend thought he actually must be pondering the matter over; accordingly he began to rally him again, upon which he took out his watch and declared he must go. (He knew Elinor was gone to drink tea with the Miss Silverstones.)

"So you can give me no advice as to Hewly," he said, as they walked across the lawn together.

"He will not leave you, merely because he knows you wish it," was the reply; "and as you have made an agreement for two years, I do not see what is to be done. As long as he has any hope of Miss Paton he never will stir, and if that should be put an end to, I think I should venture on the experiment of inclosing him a cheque in a letter for one or two hundred pounds, and advising him to travel for the benefit of his health,—for you say he is anything but strong."

Allerton greatly admired the ingenuity of the proposal, and declared that he would certainly put it in practice if Hewly did not succeed in obtaining Miss Paton's hand; after which he went home, and wished he could have summoned courage to tell Dreux how much he admired his sister, and was very angry with him for being so blind, or pretending to be so, and for continuing to tease him about a lady for whom he did not care a straw. However, he comforted himself with the thought that unless Elinor loved some one else, which he shrewdly suspected she did *not*, there was very little doubt about his ultimately succeeding.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CHARADE ACTED TWICE.


It would be rather difficult to describe how the next few weeks were spent by Marion; she herself could scarcely tell in looking back upon them. She went to a good many dinner-parties and tea-parties, these last being described irreverently by her brother as consisting of three courses: tea, twaddle, and tarts. She took many rides and walks into the country, and she made a friendship with Elinor, generally seeing her every day. Mrs. Paton had asked Elinor to come and spend the mornings with her niece and daughters whenever Mr. Dreux was engaged,—accordingly, many a pleasant morning they all passed, sitting out in the garden under the shade of some tall elm-trees which grew close together on the lawn. Mr. Dreux generally brought his sister on these occasions, and often felt considerable reluctance in leaving her,—a bevy of fair girls sitting in the open air in delightful shades, occupied with their needles and pencils, being just

what some men most like to join themselves to, especially as they are generally welcome, and can give piquancy to the group by reading aloud. Mr. Dreux read remarkably well, and two or three times he stayed for half an hour, and in leaving, detected himself envying Frank Maidley, who contrived to lounge away the greater part of each morning in Mr. Paton's garden. He was trying to make himself agreeable to Marion, and in so doing afforded an immense deal of amusement to her cousins, especially to Dora, who wanted something to divert her mind from the letter, which she had never mentioned in her family. Frank's wooing was quite in the gay style, and did not seem to proceed at all the worse for being carried on under the eyes of other ladies. He used to complain bitterly, but with a slight air of banter withal, that he could make no impression on his fair one; and as Marion resolutely refused to be flirted with, he used to appeal to her cousins what he should do next, upon which Dora would set him to read poetry in an impassioned tone, sometimes to write it, which he did very nicely, and, as Elizabeth said, it kept him quiet.

"I can't make any impression, I see," he one day said to that young lady, with a sepulchral sigh.

Marion began to feel a little annoyed.

"I think," said Elizabeth mischievously, "it may be as well to try to excite jealousy! Suppose you direct your attentions to me for a while!"



"Ah, Miss Paton, you are doubtless very charming," replied Frank, "but—but I heard some talk yesterday about wedding-cake."

"Well, try Dora," said Elizabeth, laughing.

The despairing swain immediately did as he was desired, and Dora humoured the joke.

"How do her eyes look now?" said Elizabeth. "Any chance of jealousy? I'm afraid they are as blue as ever."

Frank turned round to look at Marion's eyes. "She seems much better pleased than usual, and I delight to please her," he remarked; "therefore, Miss Paton, if you please, let us proceed as before."

With all this he was so good-humoured and droll, so amusing and clever, that it was impossible to be really angry with him, and Marion, having fully made up her mind that nothing on earth—no, *nothing* should ever induce her to become Mrs. Frank Maidley, was quite pleased to see his attentions directed to her cousin, first in joke, and afterwards, as she could not help fancying, sometimes in earnest.

Mr. Allerton, finding that Elinor spent so much time with the Miss Patons, easily got up an acquaintance with their father, whose call upon him made a good beginning; and as Mrs. Paton was generally engaged in assisting with various preparations for her daughter's wedding, and ordering the furniture for her house, she was

absent a great deal from home, and not quite aware of the extent to which he stretched her husband's invitation, which had merely been couched in some such ordinary terms as these, that he was sure Mrs. Paton and the young ladies would be glad to see him when he liked to call.

Mr. Allerton accordingly liked to call very often when Elinor was there, and used to join the party under the trees, and take part in whatever occupation or amusement was going on. As Elinor always looked pained when he said anything of a complimentary nature to her, he had now altogether ceased to do so, confining himself to attentions of a different kind, but not less flattering. She certainly got dearer to him every day, and he could scarcely believe he was indifferent to her, yet she did not look so happy nor so blooming as when he had first met with her, though this, he tried to persuade himself, must be nothing more than his own fond fancy.

As for Mr. Dreux, he had often been in Marion's company, and often heard her sing. He had long made up his mind that he greatly preferred her to any one whom he had ever seen, but his affection had come on by degrees, and partook of his natural character,—it was not demonstrative, but it was deep and patient, quite beyond the power of any circumstances to overthrow, partaking of all the energy and intensity of his character, and, unconsciously to himself, most carefully concealed from view. Such

being the case, it was not strange that he should have been greatly perplexed by the unaffected ease of her manner—the complete freedom from embarrassment with which she met his eye. And as he had seen early in their intercourse that she perceived the peculiarities of his character, he wondered at an ignorance which he sometimes fancied must be feigned, so completely oblivious did it seem of his preference, his intentions, or his hopes.

Elinor and Marion being now much together, became attached to each other; and as it was now the Midsummer holidays, Rosina was admitted to be present at most of their conferences, while Elizabeth began to be fully occupied with the arrangement of her new house, and Dora, who had entirely given up attending the morning service, nobody at home exactly knowing why, was often occupied with Frank Maidley, who contrived to engage her attention to an extent that soon became perceptible to her father, who resolutely shut his eyes to it, which was his general habit when he did not disapprove. As for Marion, she sunk again into the background as suddenly as she had risen out of it; and it soon became obvious enough, that in this new affair, though the lady might be half in joke, the gentleman was quite in earnest.

It is highly probable that she would soon have forgotten the affair in which Mr. Hewly had figured if it had not unluckily happened that just at this time Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson, with their daughter, came

home, after a few weeks' absence at the sea-side. The latter came the next morning to see Dora, who, after being closetted with her for two hours, came down with unequivocal symptoms of tears about her eyes and in very low spirits.

"So he's the son of a butcher," said Helen, during their conference, for Dora had told her the whole affair by letter. "Well, certainly that's a pity."

"Yes," said Dora, sobbing. "And only think, Helen, Wilfred says—"

"Oh! *he* knows of it, then?" said Helen, hastily.

"Yes; and he says he knows his brother is a butcher in Staffordshire to this day, and that Mr. Hewly himself used to wear a blue apron and carry out the meat when he was a little boy?"

"But if there is no better reason than *that* for your not accepting him," argued Helen—

"But papa said it was a mean, shuffling letter, and no one could tell whether it contained an offer or not," replied Dora, weeping still more.

"He's incapable of such a thing," exclaimed Helen, with enthusiasm. "What, that dear, good man, with his holy countenance,—that dear Mr. Hewly,—write a mean, shuffling letter! I can't believe it."

"Papa said so," said Dora.

"Then did your father strictly forbid your entering the church again? Did he desire you never to

speak to poor Mr. Hewly, nor to receive any more letters?"

"No," said Dora, who had not had the satisfaction of being persecuted; "but he said he should think me *very imprudent* if I ever went there again, so of course I could not do it; and that he should trust to my good sense not to answer any letter without showing it to him."

"Good sense!" said Helen, scornfully. "Trust to your good sense,—when your soul is bowed down with grief, and when you love a man like that dear, deserted, excellent Mr. Hewly!"

"Papa said he did not believe that I did love him." And really she seemed to have some doubts herself, if we may judge by her dubious tone. "He said it was a Jesuitical letter, and—oh! Helen, he said he did not believe that Hewly really cared for me. And, besides, papa has UNFORTUNATELY found out that Mr. Hewly is very much in debt;—dear, good man, it must be from his charities, or something of that sort. But papa thought he wanted to marry me for the sake of my fortune."

"Well, never mind, dearest Dora," said Helen, soothingly, "we cannot expect to be understood by those of opposite sentiments. If your papa *will* discountenance Hewly, and if he *will* look coolly on you on account of your religion—"

"He doesn't," interrupted Dora, testily; "he is the same to me as ever,—more kind, if anything.

And, oh! Helen, I am sure it is true that Mr. Hewly is in debt,—and—and, oh! how—how unhappy I am!”

Helen wept in sympathy. It was quite clear that Dora was not persecuted in any way, nor watched, nor even suspected,—her father “placed perfect confidence in her good sense.” There was a subject for regret and condolence! Why, he must have concluded that her feelings were but little touched; indeed he had said as much.

“What have you done with his invaluable letter?” asked Helen.

“I think I put it in my desk.”

Helen opened her eyes:—“You *think* you put it in your desk!” she exclaimed. “Why, don’t you know where it is? If it had been mine I would have carried it about with me to the day of my death.”

Dora blushed for her forgetfulness. “I remember now,” she said, “I gave it back to papa.”

“Then he did not insist upon your burning it?” asked Helen.

“No; he never insisted on anything. He only said he was thankful that his dear child had confided in him, and given him an opportunity to investigate Hewly’s character before he had had time to make any impression on her heart. So nothing can make papa believe that I like him or care for him. But *you* still go to St. Bernard’s, Helen?”

"Oh, yes," replied the confidante, with a peculiar twitch of the head. "I am thankful to say *my* father makes no objection."

Thus the conversation ended, and for several days after, Dora was out of spirits; but, as Helen did not come to see her again that whole week, she soon began to recover herself, and take part in all the little arrangements and preparations for the coming wedding, though for consistency's sake she still tried to keep up an appearance of dejection before her cousin Wilfred, because he was the only person besides her father who knew of the affair; but even this soon wore off, and Dora was herself again, as kind and good-humoured as ever. She was one day standing alone in the little china-room, when young Greyson came in and, looking in her face, smiled good-humouredly.

"What are you thinking of, Wilfred?" said Dora.

"I was thinking," he replied, "how pleasant it is to meet with young ladies who permit their fathers to decide important matters for them, and afterwards turn their thoughts from the subject, and behave as agreeably as if nothing had happened. And though, to be sure, in some cases there never could have been any real *affection* between the parties ——"

"How do you know that?" exclaimed Dora, thrown off her guard.

"I know it because the lady has far too much

good sense really to care for a mean, sneaking character, and I am not afraid the gentleman should break his heart. By the bye, of course he has to walk home every day from church with Helen; because the London-road, you know, is such an intricate neighbourhood,—there are so many almost impassable fords to get over, so many gangs of highwaymen (as one would naturally expect should be the case), and so many dangerous bogs, that she stands in great need of protection, as, indeed, I told her to-day, when I met her walking to church by herself. I said to her:—‘Helen, it grieves me to see you going through this perilous country alone, but I hope some one conducts you home, at least as far as the turning, where,’ I said, ‘he would naturally leave you; otherwise he would be seen from your father’s windows, and that would seem like a designed reproach to your father for not providing you with a proper escort, and thus throwing you on the mercy of a benevolent stranger.’”

“What did Helen say to that?” asked Dora, surprised at Wilfred’s speech and all that it insinuated.

“Why, really,” replied her cousin, with unabated good humour, “her reply was so little to the purpose that I have almost forgotten it. I think I have a recollection of her using the word ‘impertinent,’ and also the word ‘boy,’ but I cannot tax my memory beyond those two disconnected expres-

sions. I often go down the London-road now, Dora, I am so fond of that road. You would be quite surprised if you could but know how fond I am of it, and of that little lane at the back of the Fergusons' garden."

Dora smiled, in spite of herself.

"The other day," pursued Greyson, "I happened to meet Mr. Hewly walking there, with his eyes fixed on the ground, absorbed, no doubt, in pious contemplation. I know a little of him, for he and I both collect insects, and sometimes exchange a rare specimen or two. 'How do you do, Mr. Hewly?' I said, with a pleasing suavity of manner; 'I hope you are quite well this fine evening?' 'Quite well, thank you. I hope your family are well?' 'Thank you,' I replied, with intense friendliness of manner; 'I am happy to say, with the exception of my cousin Rosina, who has still a slight cough, they are all remarkably well, particularly my eldest cousin,—I don't know when I have seen her looking so well.'"

"You did not say that, Wilfred?" said Dora.

"Yes, I did. And if you had seen his face!—it was quite a treat to me to look at it. But it seems he did not wish me to have that pleasure, for he kept it turned away towards the Fergusons' garden-hedge. 'Oh!' I said, 'if you are looking for Miss Ferguson, she is just gone down the garden,—I saw her myself; she came out with her garden-bonnet on.' 'Looking for Miss Ferguson!' he

exclaimed, in extreme amazement. 'Yes,' I said, standing on tip-toe to look over the hedge, and pretending to misunderstand him; 'she is sitting in her usual place in the arbour,—good evening!' There is a little gap in the hedge near there, Dora, and I should not wonder if they talk through it sometimes, like Pyramus and Thisbe, you know."

Dora was silent for a few minutes, then she looked into her cousin's good-humoured countenance, and said, "I am glad you mentioned that I was quite well, not that he particularly cares to hear it, I dare say." She accompanied this remark with a slight toss of her graceful head.

"To say the truth, I don't think he does. He looked at me as if he would like to have set me under a tumbler, like one of his moths or butterflies, and exploded a lucifer-match under it. Well, we don't care what he thinks, that's certain."

"I'm sure *I* don't care what he thinks," said Dora.

"No," said Wilfred, "and I must go now to practise with Frank Maidley; he wants me to bring my flute with me. I saw him just now; he desires his most particular regards."

"Did he?" said Dora; "I wonder what he means by spending all his mornings at our house; it really gets quite troublesome."

"Yes, it does; and when he's at home he's always playing on the flute. He told me (not that *that* has anything to do with it,—O dear, no!) but he told

me you were fond of a flute-accompaniment to your duets."

"Silly boy," said Dora, "how tiresome he is!"

"Oh, very; 'boy' he's not, though; he'll be twenty-four next September. And as to that flute, if it does not lose him his honours it's a pity; for he deserves it should, squandering all his vacation in this way. But if he does, it won't matter to either of us, I should hope,—of course it won't."

Dora, however, looked as if it would most particularly matter. "I never liked a flute-accompaniment," she said, carelessly; "in fact, I think a man never appears to advantage playing on such a little instrument."

"Humph!" said young Greyson. He was stooping down, looking out for some music to take for the practising. "Then I think I had better tell him so."

"You can do as you please about that," said Dora.

The next day Dora and Helen met, and had a grand quarrel; not about Mr. Hewly,—his name was never even mentioned,—but when two people are bent upon breaking friendship, it is easy to find something about which to disagree.

After this Dora became quite herself, and entered into the family amusements with right good-will. Her father treated her with marked tenderness, and one day presented her with an elegant bracelet, "in token (as he phrased it) of his approval of her conduct for some time past."

While these things were going on, the intercourse between Elinor and Marion became daily more intimate ; but Mr. Dreux could not help seeing that his sister was neither well nor happy. She also seemed restless, and he thought a change might do her good.

On imparting this idea to her, and telling her that he thought he could spare a few days to take her out for a short tour, he was surprised at the earnestness with which she caught at it, and smoothed down all difficulties in the way of the project. It was accordingly soon arranged, and the next time he met Mr. Allerton he told him of it.

"I hope you will not be away long," was the reply.

"O no, but I wish Elinor to see something of this beautiful country, and I think a change will do her good ; I think of returning in time for my Thursday evening lecture."

Mr. Allerton went home, wondering whether his friend had observed his partiality for Elinor. He could not be sure, for he had never given him the slightest opportunity of being alone with her, and had seemed very silent and absent lately. However, he thought,—“On that head I have at least nothing to fear ; Dreux would, of course, rather give her to me—a man whom he knows so well—than bestow her on a stranger ; and as for his absence of manner lately, perhaps it was only put on to set me more at ease in my wooing, under pretence that he did not see it.”

The time of their absence seemed unaccountably long to him, and he had a daily argument with himself as to whether he could with propriety intrude upon them on their return, before the evening service. At last he decided that he could not, but being determined not to forego the pleasure of seeing Elinor that night, he resolved to go to the church, and be shown into her brother's seat, "where (he thought) I shall certainly find her, and be near her during the service."

He carried his intention into effect, and found he had not miscalculated. Elinor was there, and, sitting by her, he soon lost himself in a delightful reverie. But the commencement of the sermon recalled him to himself. He had heard a great deal of his friend's eloquence, but had hitherto adhered to his resolution of not entering his church. The same voice which influenced him so much in private now appealed to him more powerfully, and so completely carried him away that he troubled himself very little as to whether the words it uttered were truth or error.

Of all pleasures that exist in the world there is none equal in power over an enthusiastic mind to the pleasure of listening to beautiful ideas, uttered by a fine human voice, in the impassioned words that befit them.

On this occasion he was completely enthralled, but not convinced; and though he now began to feel, or fancy, a greater distance than ever between them, as far as talent was concerned, he was too warm-

hearted to be humbled by it, and too generous to envy.

After service, he accompanied Elinor to the vestry, where he found Dreux in some perplexity. The Clerk had just given him a message from a sick person, requesting that he would come and see him as soon as possible.

"Will you go to-night?" asked Allerton.

"O yes, I shall go directly; but I must just see my sister home first." He paused a moment, and then said, "Unless I might trespass on you to do that for me."

"Oh, I shall be most happy," was the ready reply, Allerton feeling only anxious not to express his pleasure too strongly.

The next morning, as they sat at breakfast, Elinor said to her brother, "Mr. Allerton told me last night that the Paton family had met with an adventure which might have led to serious consequences."

Her brother looked up, and coloured; she thought she knew the nature of his feelings in that quarter, and looked another way as she went on: "They were riding through Feynly woods the other day, in that little open carriage of theirs, when the ponies took fright, backed, and upset them all upon a bank; they were none of them much hurt."

"Who was in the carriage?" asked her brother.

"Dora, Marion, and Walter inside, and young Greyson on the box. Walter's face was very much

bruised, and Marion sprained her foot ; but it could not have been anything of consequence, for Mr. Allerton says he saw her sitting in the pony carriage yesterday, looking as well as usual."

Marion, in fact, had not been much hurt, though sufficiently to confine her to the sofa for a few days. The family physician had said she must give herself a week of perfect rest, and then he thought she would be as well as ever.

The house was now unusually quiet, for nearly half the members of the family fancied they were wanted to assist in preparations for the wedding which was to take place in a few days. On the morning after Elinor's return no one was left at home but Marion and Rosina. Walter and young Greyson were gone to a gardener, to order plants and flowers to grace the conservatory. Mrs. Paton and her two elder daughters were at Elizabeth's house ; and Marion, looking quite as blooming as usual, sat in the drawing-room, with her foot on a hassock, sealing up Mr. and Mrs. Fred Bishop's wedding-cards. She had a candle before her, and a formidable array of white sealing-wax, and envelopes with silver edges. Rosina helped her for an hour, and then went to take her French lesson. Marion had enough before her to occupy the whole morning, and she was sealing away with great diligence when the old footman brought her a card.

"Mr. Dreux's compliments, ma'am, and calls to inquire how you are to-day?"

"My compliments, and my foot is nearly well," said Marion.

Presently the man returned, and said, "If agreeable to you Mr. Dreux will come in, ma'am."

Marion replied, "Certainly, I shall be very happy to see Mr. Dreux."

Accordingly he was ushered in, and an observant person might have read something in the earnest look of anxiety he gave her, as she half rose to give him her hand, and in his smile of instant relief when he had seen with his own eyes that she looked as well as usual. Marion had generally a very quick perception of what others thought and felt, but in the present instance she was wondering what Elizabeth would think of his seeing her occupation, and whether she would mind this early exhibition of her wedding-cards, for Elizabeth had so many fancies as the wedding-day approached that it was quite a difficult matter to please her.

She decided, while asking a few questions about the journey and about Elinor, that as time pressed she must not be too fastidious; accordingly, after the first few minutes, she gently resumed her occupation.

As Mr. Dreux did not help her much, she was incessantly obliged to think of something fresh to say, and the conversation flagged several times, and was highly uninteresting.

Marion began to fall back upon her favourite regret that she had no conversational powers. At

last, notwithstanding all her attempts, matters came to a dead pause. He did not answer her last remark at all, and, while quietly sealing the notes, she looked up at him, and became conscious that something must be coming.

Mr. Dreux had taken up a piece of the white sealing-wax and snapped it in two. Marion could not think why his face was touched with such a peculiar expression of agitation and embarrassment. At length, with an exceedingly deep sigh, as if he had just contrived to screw his courage to the sticking point, he turned suddenly towards her, looked in her face, and in an instant the whole truth flashed upon her mind.

Mr. Dreux, who generally looked as if nothing short of an earthquake would frighten him, and as if he would not mind getting up at a moment's notice to make a speech before the Queen, Lords, and Commons, the assembled Bishops, and the Peeresses in their robes, was evidently, for the time being, a different person. He was so very much afraid of saying anything that would not be well taken, that he absolutely could not open his lips at all.

Nevertheless, when he saw by Marion's manner that she understood the state of the case, he recovered himself, and having previously snapped the sealing-wax into twenty little pieces, and his usually calm features being coloured with an emotion which was evidently a very hopeful one, he began several

Mr. Dreux, as if afraid to hear her finish the sentence, said hurriedly, "I have made a great mistake. I believed you to be perfectly aware of my feelings and of my hopes."

"His hopes," thought Marion. "Did he really think I both knew it and gave him encouragement?"

"I beg you will excuse my folly," he proceeded, venturing to resume his place on the sofa, "it was the strength of my regard which misled me."

His confusion and bitter disappointment struck Marion with the certainty that he had scarcely contemplated the possibility of a refusal; even now he seemed scarcely able to believe it; but as she really felt nothing for him but esteem and admiration for his talents, it was comparatively easy for her to express herself, and she said, "I cannot feel otherwise than grateful for the preference you have shown me, Mr. Dreux, but as I have before assured you that it is a preference of which I never had the slightest idea—I have really never thought of you otherwise than as a friend, I hope this assurance of my unconsciousness will acquit me in your mind of any trifling with your feelings. Still more, I hope you will soon see that no woman can be worthy of you who can give only esteem in return for regard like yours."

In reply to all this he only repeated, "I have made a great mistake; I hope you will forgive me."

He folded his arms, and appeared to be gazing

out of the window. Here the interview ought to have ended, but Marion, being a prisoner to the sofa, felt very much embarrassed. Any occupation was better than sitting with her hands before her. So she ventured very quietly to go on with her sealing-wax, and now and then cast a stealthy glance at her companion.

The restless flashing of his eyes and the slight compression of his lips were all the tokens he gave of the pain he was enduring. His fine features expressed not only disappointment, but something like shame. Perhaps he inwardly inveighed against the folly which had so often whispered, loud enough for him to hear, that he was quite irresistible; perhaps he wished he had never heard any of that soft flattery which, though he generally rejected and always despised it, had yet by the frequency of its appeals to his vanity, made him almost take for granted that he must possess some slight title to the perfections it ascribed to him.

Whatever he thought he said nothing, till Marion, who could not rise, happened to drop some slight article, the fall of which attracted his attention.

Some faint hopes might perhaps have been growing up during the silence, for when he arose and she held out her hand to him, his eyes certainly expressed an appeal, but the answering look only told of the most gentle womanly regret. She said, "Good morning, Mr. Dreux," and he took his leave, for he saw it was of no use.

Now it so happened—and unfortunate things will happen sometimes—it so happened that Mrs. Paton, Dora, and Elizabeth no sooner entered the door on their return home, than they asked the old servant whether any one had called.

“Only Mr. Dreux, ma’am,” replied the man, who had his own thoughts on the subject, “and he did not stay very long. I should say,” he continued, carrying his eye slowly along the cornice of the hall, as if to assist his memory, “I should say Mr. Dreux did not stay over three quarters of an hour, ma’am.”

Now three quarters of an hour is a long time for a morning call, and that the old servant knew quite as well as they did; nevertheless, when the young ladies entered the drawing-room neither of them said a word to Marion on the subject nor alluded to anything connected with it, though they watched her as she went on sealing the notes with great diligence and a brighter bloom than usual in her face.

Their mother thought this call rather a pointed thing, and that if Mr. Dreux did not mean something by it he had no right to sit three quarters of an hour with her niece, but that this had been the end of his wooing instead of the beginning she had no more idea than she had of what he was suffering at that moment.

In the evening, Elizabeth, having dismissed the last milliners, and given the last sitting to the

artist who was taking her miniature, seen the garden of her new house finished to the last bit of trellis-work, and heard Fred Bishop call himself the happiest of men, was in such a high state of hilarity that she wanted some active amusement, in short, some mischief "for her idle hands to do." So she proposed that they should act charades, a favourite amusement of theirs, and one in which she particularly excelled, though it must be owned that she often called in the aid of mimicry, and often indulged in something personal in her charades.

Frank Maidley was present, and was always an invaluable helper. They were to perform the charade in the little music-room, there being a curtain and all things conformable, and the audience was to sit in state in the main drawing-room.

The audience, as is usual on these occasions, was extremely impatient. At length the curtain was drawn back, and Elizabeth was seen, with a large cap on, a pair of spectacles, a black stuff apron, and at her side a huge bunch of keys. Maidley, as butler, stood at the sideboard.

Elizabeth. "So he's not come down yet!—sleep, sleep, sleep, for ever. What a lazy fellow he is! Never mind, sleep costs nothing. Where's my straw bonnet, Pinch? I'll go into the garden."

Pinch. "Please, ma'am, the 'osses is hungry, and this morning, as I was laying cloth for breakfast, Neptune, he looked in, and saw your bonnet

lying on the chair, and he ate it up, ma'am. If they aint to have no hoats, poor dears, they must have something."

E. "You must be more careful in future, Pinch. That bonnet cost 6*s.* 6*d.* when it was new, and there was a great deal of wear in it still. I've only had it—let me see! how long has my poor dear sister been dead? Why, seventeen years. How time flies! Well, she left it me in her will, and her turned black silk gown with a train to it. Ah! she was a saving woman,—an excellent woman, Pinch."

Enter Wilfred.] "Good morning, mother;—a beautiful sunshiny morning."

E. "Sunshiny, indeed! Ah! boy, boy, you never consider how the sun fades the curtains and blisters the paint on the house-door."

Greyson sits down to the table.] "What! a partridge again, mother! I declare, we never have anything but game, mother! I've not tasted anything else at breakfast, dinner, or tea, since I came into the country;—game and little birds, thrushes and sparrows."

E. "To be sure, my dear. Why, you don't consider that birds cost nothing,—at least, nothing but the bullets they shoot them with."

Pinch. "Lawk! ma'am, we don't shoot birds with bullets! Why, dear me, it's nothing but shot."

E. "Remember your place, Pinch, and don't be

disrespectful. Well, I mean shot, of course ;—it's all the same thing. I hope, Pinch, you're careful not to waste the shot : the number of shots I sometimes find in one wing is really quite distressing. The age is grown very extravagant ! Instead of pouring in the shot in that reckless manner, you should count how many birds there are in a covey, and put in one for each of them."

Pinch. "I always does, ma'am ; and then I shuts my eyes and lets the gun off. But sometimes all the shot gets into one of them, and I'm sure I can't help that ;—I lets the gun off very straight."

Wilfred. "And that's the reason you get so few birds, eh ?"

Pinch. "I reckon myself a reasonable good shot, Sir. I shot five partridges this very week, not counting three as I took in the nest, and that dear one that I found under the hedge ; and then I got two goslings, and ever so many blackbirds, besides a polecat."

E. [*Looking very hard into Wilfred's plate, which is, in fact, a china basket, full of visiting cards.*] "My dear boy, I see several shots on the edge of your plate ;—one, two, three. Why, dear me, there are six of them. Here, Pinch, take these and clean them,—they'll do again."

Pinch. "Yes, ma'am." [*Brings a hat by way of waiter, into which Wilfred drops several cotton balls.*]

E. "My dear boy, how very large your appetite

is! I'm sure you'll have an illness if you live so high. Let me feel your pulse. Ah! very feverish indeed!"

Wilfred goes on eating.] "What's this, mother?"
[*Draws a straw work-basket towards him.*]

E. "Why—why that's a meat-pie, my dear. Don't you think it would be as well not to cut it to-day?"

Wilfred. "Why, the crust's so hard I can't cut it. Oh, that's right,—it's all come off in a piece. Pretty pie-crust, truly! What's this, mother?"
[*Draws out a short ivory knitting-needle.*]

E. "That's—that's—why, dear me, how foolish cook is! I told her particularly not to put their tails in."

W. "Tails, mother? Rabbits' tails are not so long as this!"

E. "How can you be so undutiful, my dear? I hope you don't suspect me of anything, I'm sure! The pie is very good,—I saw it made myself."

W. "Suspect what, mother?" [*Turns it about with an air of disgust.*] "I hope it's not made of anything nasty. What's this pie made of, Pinch? If you don't tell me I'll toss it out of the window."

Pinch. "Rats, Sir, and very good wholesome food too. I hope, Sir, you'll never come to the workhouse for despising of them. Cook and me would no more think of objecting to eat 'em, if there wasn't cold meat and ceteras which requires speedy eating, than we should think of ——"

E. "Pinch, don't forget your place. Why, my dear,—the fact is, my dear, and I don't mind, as you now are getting old, letting you know a few things that are done in *all* families,—*all*, my dear, though they may pretend to the contrary. Don't look at me in that undutiful manner. The fact is, my dear, that on Saturday Jowler killed six or seven fine tender young rats, and I really thought it would not be right to waste them. They are very good indeed smothered in onion, and stuffed with sage and fennel. The clergyman called here yesterday, and I had one served up to him fricasseed, and he declared it was excellent."

Wilfred. [*Fishing out a knitting-shuttle.*] "And what's this, mother, I should like to know?"

E. "Oh! what a sad thing it is to have an undutiful, spendthrift, extravagant son!" [*Puts her handkerchief to her eyes and sobs.*] "Why, my dear, can't you tell by the shape of it that that's a fish? One of the gold fish died yesterday, and I had it put into the pie;—it's quite fresh."

"Oh, my work!" cried Dora—the owner of the basket, as Wilfred, drawing it towards him, stirred up a tangled mass of threads and worsted with his penknife, the weapon wherewith he was eating his breakfast.

"Oh! Dora," said Elizabeth, "now that really is too bad. We can't go on if the audience is to interrupt us in that way."

"Well, only let me come and get my work-

basket. There, really, the shocking confusion your hopeful son has made in it!"

"Come for it, then; and we had better draw back the curtain, and call this the end of the first scene. Come, Frederick, you said you would help us with the next. And, my dear son, you may go, and let a mother, in parting, beg you to practise economy."

"Oh, I know what the word is;—don't you, Dora?" cried Walter. "So we don't want to see any more of that scene. It's either *save* or *shot*, I'm certain."

Frederick Bishop went into the little room, and Wilfred came out and sat down among the audience. And now was heard a vast deal of tittering, and whispering, and running out of the little room. The audience, at first, were so occupied with chattering together that they did not observe it. At last, however, they got impatient, and began to exclaim, that if the show did not begin directly they should amuse themselves in some other way.

Upon this the curtain was slowly drawn aside, and Elizabeth was seen seated among a number of flower-pots, hastily brought in for the purpose. She was completely dressed in Marion's habiliments,—shawl, bonnet, gown, even parasol,—and held a few flowers, to make it more impossible to mistake who she was intended to represent. She held a book in her hand, and began to read as from its pages: "They *Drew* him in such fair colours,

that it quite Drew my admiration—his robes as white as a Dru-id's, and his smile as sweet (oh, far sweeter, *I think!*) than that of a Merry An-drew."

Marion, on hearing this breathed quick, and began to tremble for what might be coming. Walter whispered to her that the word was *drew*. She looked anxiously at Wilfred, but he seemed to see nothing strange in the scene, so with a flushed cheek and trembling heart she bent her eyes again upon the actors. She could not expostulate, for that would have betrayed her.

(Enter Fred Bishop in a white apron.) "Please, ma'am, a gentleman has called to see you."

E. "Oh! show him down the garden to this arbour."

(Exit Fred, with half-a-dozen silver spoons and a great piece of wash-leather in his hand, to show that he personates a footman.)

E. "Dear me, I feel quite nervous. What shall I do till he comes? Let me see. I'll be reading." (Snatches up a book, which happens to be 'The Rambler,'—opens at random, and begins to read aloud.) "Others may be persecuted, but I am haunted. I have good reason to believe that eleven painters are now dogging me, for they know that he who can get my face first will make his fortune. I often change my wig, and wear my hat over my eyes, by which I hope somewhat to confound them. I have, indeed, taken some measures for the preservation of my papers, having put

them into an iron chest, and fixed a padlock upon my closet. I change my lodgings five times a-week, and always remove at the dead of night. Thus I live, in consequence of having given too great proofs of a predominant genius, in the solitude of a hermit, with the anxiety of a miser, and the caution"—

(Enter Maidley, with his hat on, a pair of bands made of silver paper, and a white neckerchief: rushes up to Elizabeth, and without more ado goes down on his knees): "Do I behold the fair image which ever lives in my heart?"

E. "Oh, really, my dear Sir, I feel quite confused—so very awkward that you should happen to overhear my little efforts to—to improve my mind with the writings of our classic Johnson. Pray, rise."

"No, ma'am, I will not rise till you promise to accept this little offering, which I am proud to—if I may say it—to lay at your feet" (takes off his hat with gravity, and looking steadily at her, draws out of it a red pocket-handkerchief, in which are tied up quantities of damsons; he unties it, and pours the contents into Elizabeth's lap, saying, with his hand on his heart),—

"I give thee *all*, I can no more,
Though poor the offering be;
My heart and *PLUMS* are all the store
That I can give to thee."

Elizabeth receiving the plums graciously, and beginning to eat them—"Oh, but I am afraid this

plum is not quite ripe yet. Pray, let me beg of you to rise."

But as if her entreaty had taken effect on others besides young Maidley, almost every one in the outer drawing-room rose also. Wilfred had dexterously turned down the lamp, and all was darkness and confusion. Fred Bishop tumbled over a settee in groping his way to the bell to call for other lights; and it would seem as if the charade was forgotten, so completely was the subject dropped.

When the lamps were again lighted, Elizabeth saw by her mother's face that she was seriously hurt and annoyed. Dora also looked flushed, and, as usual, took upon herself to propose some fresh way of spending the evening, and to see that matters were put in train for it. The two gentlemen had sense enough to see that they had by no means made themselves acceptable by their little scene; and Elizabeth, seeing that Marion had slipped out of the room, took the opportunity to follow her.

Elizabeth ran up into Marion's little parlour, and there found her sitting by the window, looking out into the moonlight. She ran up to her, half afraid, half laughing.

"Really, Marion, I assure you I had not the very slightest idea you would be annoyed,—and if you are, I am very sorry."

Marion made no answer.

"I assure you, my dear, if I could have known

it would have put you so completely to the blush—— but how did you get up stairs by yourself?"

"Wilfred helped me," said Marion.

"Ah! well, I see you are displeased. As for Wilfred, I am certain it was he who caused that sudden ending to our little scene. It would have been a good one if you could just have waited. Come, I will take off your bonnet. Why, Marion, I only wanted to call your attention to a little fact."

"What little fact?" asked Marion.

"Why, that Mr. Dreux looks at you when he is here a great deal oftener than at any of us."

"I wonder whether they have found anything out," thought Marion, and she arose hastily and stood by the window.

"My dear Marion," said Dora, coming in, "I am sure Elizabeth is really sorry."

"How ridiculous you are, Dora," said the thoughtless Elizabeth. "Yes, I really am sorry, of course; but what a fuss about a trifle!"

Marion still stood in the window, and made no answer. The two sisters looked at each other; then Elizabeth came up to her cousin, and drew her arm round her neck. "I really am very sorry, dearest Marion," she said, kissing her.

"But before Frank Maidley, Elizabeth," urged Marion, for Elizabeth still laughed in spite of her protestations, "how could you do it?"

"Frank Maidley, Marion! Why, I declare he

was the first person who put it into my head. He came in the other day, and said, with the greatest coolness, 'So Mr. Dreux has been here. Well, how's Mrs. Arthur Cecil?'

"It was excessively impertinent of him, then," said Dora, gravely. "I could scarcely have believed he would have done such an ungentlemanly thing."

"There," thought Elizabeth, "now I have got myself into another disagreeable predicament."

"I do hope you will never couple my name with Mr. Dreux's again," said Marion.

"No, I really will not. But why not? there's nothing in it!"

Oh, because I don't like it," said Marion; "and besides, it is extremely wrong. What right have you to take it for granted that he has any such intentions with respect to me, or to make him appear so ridiculous?"

"*Intentions!* Marion. Why, how seriously you take the matter up! I never thought anything of the kind. I only think he is perhaps a little smitten, and comes here rather oftener than he used to do. But why do you stand? Don't you know you ought not? How is your foot to-night?"

"Oh, it feels nearly well this evening," answered Marion, relieved by the last remark, which showed her perfect ignorance of what had happened.

"Well, you won't bear any malice, Marion?"

Marion laughed, and kissed her cousin, but she

could not quite recover her composure, so she did not come down again that night.

Nothing more was said to Elizabeth, for as she was to leave them so very soon, no one of the family liked to shadow her *after-recollections* of those evenings with anything unpleasing. But though Elizabeth was not to be teased, her mother could not possibly do without some one to whom to repeat over and over again how deeply she was hurt by this extreme impropriety, this very great want of delicacy, &c., &c. So poor Dora, who had been summoned to her mother's dressing-room, could only regret the past, and hear her mother predict that *now* she was certain nothing ever would come of what might, if undisturbed, have ended in a union, but *now* it was not likely Marion could get over this annoyance sufficiently to like Mr. Dreux. Dora said what she could to palliate her sister's want of discretion, and to soothe her mother, but she was seriously annoyed herself, and the more so, because Frank Maidley had been the aider and abettor in this unlucky charade.

CHAPTER XIV.

DISUNION.

MR. DENTY, after his interview with Marion, walked home, like a man in a dream. Whatever pain, disappointment, or vexation he might have felt, he had retained till the last moment, a kind of secret incredulity, a lurking hope, that she would not permit him to leave her without one word that he could construe in his own favour. This hope did not utterly forsake him till she held out her hand at parting, with that look of gentle regret for the mental suffering of which she had been the innocent cause, but without anything in her whole expression which seemed to wish for a renewal of his attentions.

He always kept a strong constraint upon his feelings. His face, as he walked along the streets, bore little evidence of what was going on within, beyond a more settled gravity than usual ; but as soon as he reached his own house, he went hastily up stairs to shut himself up in his library, and as he entered the

room his face, already changed from its enforced calmness, looked anxious and restless.

But silence and solitude, the relief he so much needed, were not awaiting him. There was some one in the room; Allerton was walking up and down in it; and as he came forward to shake hands with him, with his usual hearty cordiality, he said,—“You see, Dreux, I have invaded your premises, for the fact is, I want to have some private conversation with you. I thought you would never come in. But what’s the matter?—you look ill.”

He felt disappointed, but only answered, “I have rather a sharp headache,” and threw himself upon a sofa near the window, pressing his hand upon his forehead.

“Ah, that’s the consequence of working so hard; I knew you would exert yourself more than ever after that short holiday. And why have you placed yourself in this glare of light?—a strange remedy for a headache!” So saying, he drew down the green blind, and going up to the couch, said,—“Come, let me see what sort of a pulse you have got.”


“Oh, there is really nothing the matter with me, Allerton, beyond this headache; I only want a little rest.”

The look which was directed to him, in reply, said so plainly, “I am certain there is something the matter,” that he added, in explanation, “I mean

that I am not ill, but something has happened which has disturbed me very much."

Allerton did not wish to be inquisitive, and a pause ensued, during which he walked up and down the room, as he always did when excited, either pleasurably or otherwise.

His host watched him a while, thinking that he had no recollection, during all their intercourse, of ever having wished him away before. Now his desire to be alone made him so restless that he could not keep two minutes together in the same position. At length he said, "I believe you said you had something to tell me, or that you wanted some private conversation." Allerton did not cease to walk, and it was difficult to divine the meaning of his half-pleased, half-embarrassed manner; but, as if he wished to make it more difficult still, he presently broke silence by relating a variety of particulars respecting his parentage, his past life, his prospects,—giving an exact account of his income from various sources, with a short digression to explain his expectations; and all this he did like a man performing some duty which must naturally have been expected of him. At first, Mr. Dreux was so preoccupied, and so wide of the mark, that he thought he was going to ask him to lend him some money; and he was just on the point of declaring his willingness to do so, without all this preamble, but checked himself; and Allerton went into various



details, each one more perplexing than the last,—his bewildered auditor getting more and more confused, and feeling an uneasy consciousness that he ought to know what was coming, he ended his communications by saying, “And you agree with me, of course.”

Dreux, without much consciousness of what he was talking about, answered mechanically, “Of course.”

Thereupon followed a short silence. “Well, I wish he would help me through,” thought Allerton, glancing towards his friend, whose restless agitation became more apparent; he looked thoroughly dispirited, and what is popularly called “cut up.”

“I wonder what can have happened to disturb him so much; I have chosen a peculiarly unlucky day.” He waited a while, but no answer was forthcoming,—indeed, his friend was quite unconscious that one was expected of him; but at length, looking up, and meeting rather an earnest glance, he forced a smile, and trying to appear interested, asked if he had any more to say.

“Any more?” repeated Allerton. “Why, I do believe you have not heard the half of what I have said, Dreux. Well; I know you are not fond of finances, but of course I thought it was my duty to give you a notion of my prospects, though you have always treated me with a generous confidence, which has been highly gratifying to my feelings; and I really do feel most grateful to you for your conduct

throughout the whole affair." (Mr. Dreux upon this lifted up his eyes from the floor, and gazed at him with the most unfeigned astonishment.)

"And," proceeded Allerton, "for always permitting me such free access to your house, and for not appearing to notice how things were going on; for really, though I can fight my way tolerably well through the world, I feel quite—I am such a diffident man as regards ladies, that I believe I should have fretted myself nearly into a fever before I found courage to speak, if you had not so kindly given me the opportunity by asking me to walk home last night with your sister."

"With *my* sister!" repeated his auditor, speaking more to himself than his friend. "Is there no mistake about this?"

If Allerton had not been so preoccupied with his own pleasant thoughts, he must have remarked the sudden change of countenance which followed this remark, and the intense attention which now awaited every word he uttered.

Mr. Allerton explained that he had offered his hand to Elinor, and had elicited from her the avowal that she was not engaged.

Not a word was spoken in reply, but he perceived that his friend's powers were stretched to the utmost, either to subdue some new emotion, or to discover what *he* was expected to say.

"Did Elinor accept your proposal?" he presently asked, with tolerable self-command.

"Not exactly; one feels rather foolish when it comes to such a thing as saying that a lady testifies the reverse of indifference. I do believe your sister is not indifferent to me, but she would not give me any answer herself; indeed, when I urged her to do so, she wept, and seemed very much moved, and I began to get into a dreadful fright. However, at last she told me she would leave the answer entirely to you, and desired me to tell you that she was resolved to abide by your decision; so you may easily imagine, after that, that I felt easy, for she could not fail to know what your decision would be."

In the full confidence of his trusting nature, he stopped short, and coming up, held out his hand, saying, with a smile, "I felt for you all the affection of a brother long before I thought I should ever be one to you in reality."

Instead of taking the offered hand, Dreux made a movement which seemed to entreat his forbearance, and shrinking back, covered his face with his hands. This unexpected movement was an evident shock to Allerton, and for a moment his face darkened. But he resolutely fell back on his idea that it was illness; he was determined to distrust him no more; and when he saw how wildly the pulses were throbbing in his temples, he was confirmed in his first belief, in spite of some words which might have shaken it, "Entirely to me!—what right could she have—how could she do so, Allerton? Give me a few minutes to collect my thoughts."

His face had become so colourless that again wonder and distrust arose in Allerton's mind; but he rallied instantly, and said, "I know you are ill, Dreux; you cannot conceal it from me. I am certain something more than ordinary is the matter; you have hardly been able to attend to what I said; I have been very inconsiderate; I forgot." Thereupon he hastily threw up the blind, and opened the glass-door.

"There," he said, "come and sit here in the air, it will refresh you,—that's right. What an inconsiderate fellow I am, I have made your head worse. But, though I am very impatient, I will not ask you to think of all this at present. I shall wait for what you have to say till to-morrow morning."

His manner, always affectionate and friendly, and the expression of his face, which was full of solicitude, affected his friend almost beyond control or endurance; but he had two great causes for depression, and, as first one, and then the other, rose up before him with bewildering rapidity, he was not mastered by either, though he would doubtless have been had either existed alone.

Suddenly Allerton exclaimed,—“My groom tells me you were thrown yesterday in riding from the railway,—is that true?”

“Yes. I was not hurt.”

“Not at all? Well, but how did it happen? I thought you had such an uncommonly good seat on horseback.”

"I was quite off my guard. We were passing some hay-wagons, and I turned in the saddle to look after them. He had me off in an instant. I mounted again; but, having once thrown me, I suppose he thought he always could, for he made several attempts in that short distance. I must part with him."

"Yes, sell him, Dreux, and at once. I only wonder you have kept him so long; but you are such a reckless rider. I wish I could see you more careful. Have you not a funeral to take to-morrow?"

"Yes; I promised to do the occasional duty at Wigton while Loyde was out."

"Then I'll send my horse round for you. Don't think of mounting your own, particularly as that will be the same road on which he threw you yesterday. Well, at ten to-morrow shall I come? Shall you be ready for me then?"

"Yes; at ten."

"Well, good by, then, and take care of yourself."

Allerton, whose head was running on proposals, thought he looked like a man who had just been rejected, but most fortunately he did not say so, and took leave of him, repeating his assurance that he should come again the next day at ten.

He ran down the steps into the garden, and had reached the centre, when he turned and looked back. The windows were already shut and the

library-curtains pulled down. "Poor fellow!" he said to himself, "I wonder what can have happened." And he crossed the lawn, thinking, but in the generosity of his heart reproaching himself for the thought,—“If I had been in his place, I think, whatever private sources of care might be distracting me, I could have found some pleasure in the idea of giving my sister to my most intimate friend.”

But while these thoughts and many more were passing through his mind he had no more idea of the struggle which was going on between principle and feeling in the heart of the man he had left,—no more conception of the bitter reproach, the protracted conflict with himself, the long review in which HE and all his generous friendship came before him each time in better and in brighter colours, and his perfect consciousness of what would and must be the termination of that next day's interview,—than he had that what he had told his friend of his attachment to his sister was as new and unexpected as the sudden termination of his hopes with reference to his own.

He remained alone all the afternoon, and then Elinor came into the room, saying she wished to speak to him. She had been shedding tears, and her cheeks were pale, but, with a woman's quickness, she soon discovered that it was not for her sake alone that he was so oppressed; she was certain there must be something more. He related

somewhat of their interview, and then, drawing her towards him with almost impetuous earnestness, entreated her to release him from the obligation she had put upon him.

"You must, Arthur," she replied, "*I cannot give him a refusal.*"

"*You cannot, and yet you believe it should be done. Is he to be refused because you honour what Christ said: 'How shall two walk together except they be agreed?'* and because you know that, from opposing principles, no true harmony could result and no happiness? Or is it that you do not feel any very great interest in him? Think of this, Elinor; consider how short a time you have known Allerton. If he had not spoken out last night, should you not, on returning to your aunt, soon have forgotten any preference you might have felt? And if this is so, Elinor,—if you do not love him, cannot you tell him yourself that you do not feel a sufficient regard for him to accept his hand?"

Elinor made no answer.

He went on: "But why, in any case, leave it to me? Oh, Elinor, it is cruel! Do you not know that scarcely anything in the world could give me so much pain as to have to refuse you to my dearest friend, and to tell him that my principles demand it of me?"

"Ought I to refuse, or ought I to accept?" said Elinor.

“ If you do not love him—”

“ But if I do,—if you can advise me to accept, oh! pray do; there is nothing about him I do not love, excepting that smile that hovers about his face at the mention of many most sacred things. He used only to smile so when you were speaking, but lately he has treated even his own professed belief in the same way. He even said to me, that, at least, you had found him sincere in his creed; and now, without teaching him to believe yours, you had shaken his faith in all.”

“ Elinor, you frighten me,—Allerton a sceptic!”

“ Ah, I knew he never said such things to you; and yet, Arthur,”—she looked in her brother’s face and saw what he thought,—“ but if, when he offered me his hand, I struggled with myself and gave no word of reply; if I mastered myself sufficiently to refer him to you, and to promise, in his hearing, that I would abide by your decision, surely you will not ask me again to encounter such a scene. I have not courage to tell him in so many words that I prefer him to any one else, but that to accept his offer would be inconsistent with my profession. Even now I waver between duty and regret. I almost regret the power I have given you over me. If you give it me back again—”

“ No, my dear Elinor, I do not give it back. If it might have been otherwise I should have been thankful; but if this must be so, I will give up my friend rather than subject you to this trial.”

"*You* give him up?" said Elinor, surprised.

"He knows that it is to rest only with me. Do you think he will feel anything but anger and resentment against me, when I might have made him happy and have refused to do so? If he despises my principles now, he will detest them then, for having compelled me to withhold you from him, when natural affection and every feeling of friendship and gratitude would call for their being set aside. No, Elinor, if one of us gives him up the other must also, and, as the decision is left to me, I decide to do it. And yet, Elinor, if you could spare me this,—must I lose all the influence for good that I hoped I had acquired? Must I make this cause detestable to him which I have laboured so hard to recommend? You cannot see him; I do not ask it. But if you could write?"

But no, Elinor was inexorable; she would not see him, and she could not write.

"I am sorry if I have said too much about it," he said, when he found she was not to be persuaded. "I reproach myself for my carelessness in so constantly letting him have access. I might have known,—I ought to have foreseen what was sure to happen. But why did you give me no hint of it, Elinor? If you had, though ever so darkly, I could in great measure have prevented all this."

"I did not feel sure about it," faltered Elinor. "He never said anything decisive. Sometimes I thought I would mention it to you, or even that

I would hint to him that I should prefer a different manner. But if I had done so how deeply abashed I should have felt if he had said, as he might have done, that he was sorry I was annoyed at what he had only intended as proper attention to the sister of a friend in whose house he so constantly was, or if he had rallied me with that half playful, half respectful manner which he always assumes towards ladies."

As she stood, her colour coming and going, and her whole manner evincing the deepest regret, yet not giving way to any of those transports of sorrow, nor using any of those vehement expressions so often resorted to to express disappointed feeling, her brother remembered what she had told him of her never having been accustomed to the language of adulation, and he reproached himself for his unwillingness to endure his part of the privation, when she was so quietly resigned to hers.

"Elinor," he said gently, "you are not looking forward to any change on Allerton's part? You cannot. And you must not deceive yourself. We shall certainly part in anger to-morrow. No care on my part, no desire to conciliate can possibly prevent it, and after that we shall see him no more. Strange as it may seem, Elinor, I am certain that he expects what is coming; I saw it in his face; but I saw at the same time that he would not suffer the thought to start into prominence; he was determined not to acknowledge to himself that it

existed ; and when we parted, and I looked earnestly at him, his expression seemed to say, 'I am resolved to trust you, and resolute that you shall not read the shadow of a doubt in my eyes of your affection, or of your being willing to follow it up as I now give you opportunity.' You know Allerton's character, my dear, and you must not hope, Elinor, that we shall be reconciled again. He might hate me for a while and then come round again, but by this I shall make him despise me. He has hinted to me before now, that in his belief our most sacred feelings were instincts given us whereby to correct and govern our principles. It is clear to me that in this case he will think principles ought to give way."

"Why do you say all this to me, Arthur?"

"Partly, dearest, because you have got that little portrait of Allerton in your possession. You asked me for it nearly a fortnight ago to fix a chain to it for me."

"Well, I will give it back," said Elinor, with a sigh. "I shall bring it to you to-morrow."

"Yes, and we will not talk of this any more, my dear Elinor ; it only distresses. Without doubt you have made it a subject of prayer, and you will feel resigned and even happy. We must leave these things in the hands of our Heavenly Father. The commandment is plain, to marry only in the Lord. Let us obey in faith and trust Him with the consequences."

"And I am not to see Mr. Allerton any more? You will not ask me to take leave of him?"

"Certainly not. You shall not be distressed. I will do all I can to save you needless pain."

The next morning, punctual to the minute, Allerton came up the garden steps and rapped at the library window. He looked earnestly at his friend as he opened it. He was greeted by a sudden, and what seemed to be an involuntary smile, for it instantly disappeared, and left his face pale and overshadowed with gloom.

"Well," said Mr. Allerton, resolutely keeping to his last thought, "and how is your head?"

"It still aches; but, my dear Allerton, surely you are going to sit down!"

"Sit down! of course I am," and he threw himself upon a chair, and leaned his arms upon the table with an earnest, steady expression.

Elinor had brought down the little picture and laid it on the table. His eye lighted upon it; he pushed it a little further off, and said hastily, "Well, Dreux, I am come to hear your sister's decision—yours rather. She confirmed what I told you, did she not—that she left the decision to you?"

"Yes, she told me that it rested only with me."

Allerton looked at him, and his face darkened and his brow lowered, but he went on in a steady voice.

"And she admitted that I was not entirely

indifferent to her?" He paused for a moment, and then added, more firmly still, "Dreux, the headache does not make a man's lips tremble."

For the time they seemed to have changed natures. The passionate man was so firm and self-possessed, and had assumed so much higher ground than the other, who shrunk from his steady eyes, and seemed to have difficulty in answering,—

"Will you let me speak on another subject, Allerton, before we enter upon this? I have something to explain to you, or rather to remind you of, which I should have thought would not have come upon you quite unexpectedly."

Though he had believed in the bottom of his heart, since the past day, that this would come, he had so strenuously kept the unwelcome conviction down, that this confirmation of his worst fears struck him with a feeling like astonishment, which was increased by Dreux's manner, which even seemed to appeal to his compassion, and to dread the utterance of his next sentence still more than he did to hear it.

"What," he said, "is it possible you are going to put me off as you did yesterday?"

He was excessively angry, and yet he felt something like pity for the pain and agitation betrayed by his companion till he had heard his answer, and then every gentler feeling was gone. It was a pity these words were said; they added fuel to the

fire; but the speaker for once was so distraught, that he scarcely knew what he was talking about.

"I only ask a few minutes for explanation, Allerton. I hope you will bear with me. If my principles—"

"Your principles!" repeated Allerton, burning with anger, and scarcely believing what he heard. "Is it possible that you want to speak to me about your principles now? Don't you know what I mean? Don't you know what I came here to ask, and that with all your vaunted principles you will never make woman a more loving husband than I would make *her*? Don't you know that the decision rests with you, and that, considering the intimate friendship which has subsisted between us so long, and all the professions which have arisen from it, you would be one of the meanest rascals living if you refused? Don't you know all this, Dreux? and that if I were the most patient of men I could scarcely endure this delay. What do you mean, then, by thrusting in your detestable principles? I have to hear enough of them at all times, without being tormented with them now."

"Hear me. Only let me speak, Allerton," pleaded his auditor.

"Hear you!" repeated Allerton, in a towering passion. "I'll hear nothing but this:—will you give me your sister, or will you not? Answer me, —yes or no."

"I must and will speak to you. Allerton, hear me, I entreat of you, I beg of you, if you have any remembrance of our friendship, which has been as strong a bond as brotherhood—"

"Brotherhood!" repeated Allerton, starting up from his seat, and speaking with such intense scorn that it sent the blood up to his friend's face. "T'cha! don't talk to me of brotherhood. Let that rest with your detestable principles. You need not debase yourself by any further explanations. I shall know what to think in future of them and you." And he went on with such a torrent of reproach and invective as showed the height of his excitement, being, however, not so transported with passion that he could not see the torture he was inflicting, for at every fresh accusation this man, who was generally so calm and self-possessed, shrunk back as if he had been struck, while his very features were altered by the violence of his efforts to restrain himself. He lifted up his face as soon as there was any hope of being heard, and made another attempt to speak.

"I entreat you, Allerton, in justice, not to go away without suffering me to speak, not in self-defence or with any hope that friendly feeling toward me should ever revive in your mind again. —I know that all that is over and gone,—I only wish to express my sorrow at what is inevitable, and beg you, when you are calmer, to admit that you at least believe I have preserved my consistency at the expense of what has long been one of the best blessings of my life."

"That's enough," interrupted Allerton, who, if he had in some degree mastered his rage, was far more bitter and determined than ever; "I only ask you to answer that one question—will you give me your sister, or will you not? Say no, if you will, I shall not tell the world of it; you will only have made yourself despicable in the eyes of one man—you will have fallen lowest where you did sit highest of all—I emancipate myself from your yoke for ever; I have often thought this day would come—I thought *I* might some day provoke you past your bearing, and go out at this door to return no more; but I never thought I should go despising you so deeply, as to conquer a regard which I thought stronger than death. As for our past friendship"—he took up the little miniature case, flung it upon the ground, and struck it with his heel—"as for our past friendship, I fling it aside without regret; there is no such man as he whom I called my friend, he is NOT, and he never has been." He pushed away the crushed fragments from under his feet, and laid his hand upon the glass door, when Mr. Dreux sprung towards him, and held him so firmly by the wrists, that he could not disengage himself.

"Not yet, Allerton, and not so—don't leave my house for ever thus!"

"Will you give me your sister?—not one other word will I hear, not one."

"Allerton, stay one moment—are we really to part in this way?"

"Leave go," cried Allerton, irritated at the strength with which he held him. "The sooner I go the better; and if ever you think of me again, make up your mind that I remember our past friendship, and how you performed your part of it. I shall think of you and your principles, and everything connected with you, with utter detestation and contempt. If the whole world had leagued together to warn me of you, I would not have listened—if a voice from heaven had denounced you, I would have heard it with distrust! You have awakened me rudely from my dream, and now I know you as you are and as you have been!!"

Exerting all his strength, he wrung asunder the detaining hands; and without his hat, without the slightest look or gesture of farewell, turned his back upon the house, went deliberately across the garden, and disappeared. His late friend looked after him till he was gone, and then shut the window and let down the blind; he picked up the uninjured miniature from the remains of its broken case and held it in his hand, while he slowly collected all the articles about his room which belonged to Allerton, or that he had given him. There was the seal, cut with his crest, with which he sealed his letters when he wrote them there;—there were several books in which he had written notes, and others inscribed with his name; he had left his gloves upon the table. Having brought all these things together, he opened a drawer and buried in it the memorials of their dead friendship—there

were no memorials of his other loss to hide. And now the ideal wife seemed to come and stand beside him, looking at him with her sweet eyes: she was lost, and with her all his future changed as he looked into it—he made his appeal again, and again met that look of womanly regret; but dear as she was to him, the second loss was the one that belonged most to actual life—the one which would empty his home of the face he had been accustomed to greet with so much pleasure, and the loss of which would overcloud his sister's brow, and so cast a gloom on the life of every day.

He held the small picture pressed between the palms of his hands, and now all the circumstances of their friendship rose up before him. He felt not the slightest resentment against Allerton, but was tortured with regrets over his own blindness, and became constantly more aware how great a loss he would be to him, for he could not make friends: he had plenty of popularity, plenty of applause, many acquaintances and well-wishers; but his reserve had not suffered him to make a single intimate friend. He had always shrunk with a sensitive dislike from the outward display of his feelings; he always had great difficulty in expressing them, however strong they might be, and now he was sensible that, for anything he had said to the contrary, Allerton might easily think he cared but little for him.

In the hurry of his excitement, he thought first of the ideal wife, then of the lost friend—and all

the time struggled to master his emotions. It is strange how, when the feelings are more than usually strong, and the habit of self-control has become habitual, a man will battle with himself from mere habit, even when he is far too miserable to care whether his emotions master him or not. He walked about the library, still holding the picture in his hands, and struggling with a suffocating sensation in his throat; at last he looked at it, and happily for himself, was subdued by its tranquil smile, laid it down, and covering his face with his hands, threw himself upon his couch, and gave way to a passion of tears.

He thought, and thought a long time, and at length, between exhaustion and excitement, he fell into a troubled dream; but it seemed to himself that he could scarcely have closed his eyes before he was aroused by a brisk knocking at the door: his servant had come to remind him that it wanted but a quarter to three, it was quite time to set off for the funeral, and his horse was at the door.

What wonder if, in his hurry and excitement, he forgot the injunction never to mount him again, and set off far less able to control him than usual?

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